TALKS TO BOYS

CONROY

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[*See page* 81.

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TALKS TO BOYS

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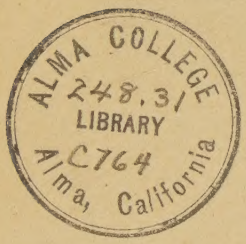
BY
JOSEPH P. CONROY, S. J.



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

WHILE the "Talks to Boys" were appearing in THE QUEEN'S WORK, the writer frequently received letters from boy friends, telling him that they had read his "stories" with profit. Their use of the word "stories" was especially pleasing criticism, since it indicated that they had seized the writer's point of view in these little talks—namely, by means of parables taken from the daily life and experiences of a boy, to urge him on, in a natural way, to the use of his supernatural advantages.

The talks are not, therefore, to be taken as a complete guide to the spiritual life. The boys to whom they are addressed are already thoroughly instructed in their religion by capable teachers and professors in Catholic schools and colleges. And these talks are designed simply to have the boy realize the importance of doing for himself with God's help, what he has been so well taught by others. To put it figuratively, the big engine is on the rails, ready to start away, and to keep the wheels from slipping, the "stories" will, it is hoped, prove to be a little sand on the track.

J. C.

FEAST OF ST. STANISLAUS 1915.

A CENTER SHOT

"I WILL do better this year."

How many of us have made this resolution? Every single one of us. A fine resolution it is, one we ought to make. And the boy who doesn't make it can take it for granted that there is something very wrong with that motor inside him, his will. Yet, after we do make the resolution, when the time comes to cast up accounts, and we look back over the past, we find too often that we didn't do what we promised ourselves. The field is not plowed. The crop is absent. Our resolution did not grow at all.

It looked like a simple resolution, at that. Easy to understand, easy to follow. It was a matter of time. We had that—a year's time. A matter of means. We had them; our professors, our books, our brains; leisure, health, and plenty of food. What was lacking? We knew what "doing better" meant, and we didn't do it. Why not? We promised ourselves to be out of the rut at the year's close—back on the

track again, running easily out toward the front. And at the end we find ourselves stumbling awkwardly along the same old groove.

What is the answer? The answer is, that the real difficulty was just where we didn't expect it, did not look for it. We knew three things in that resolution—the time, the means, the "doing better"—but we did not know the fourth, the one great essential thing, the apparently insignificant, the evanescent "I." That is what counts in any resolution, and we forgot it!

"I am going to do better." What does this mean? It means that in some matters, at least, I am in the wrong place; running with the wrong crowd; holding on to the wrong thoughts; doing wrong actions. And I intend to take myself out of it and put myself somewhere else, literally carry myself somewhere else. And I fail simply because I don't know what that "I" is, that has to be carried.

In a matter of any kind of transportation, the very first question is, "What are you going to carry?" Suppose Mr. Bunhead walks into a railroad office and says:

"I want to use your line for transportation."

"Yes, sir; what is it you wish us to haul for you?"

"Really," replies Bunhead, "I don't know."

"Don't know? Well, you've got to tell what the haul is, or we can't work at all. What is it? Dynamite, or watermelons, or mules?"

"Why, I can't just say," says Bunhead, "It is all too complicated for me."

"Good-bye."

The office man goes back quietly to his books. Bunhead makes his exit. And the haul stays exactly where it was.

Now, when we bring things right down to the last point, the real reason why we don't do better with our resolution, why we don't haul ourselves from the wrong place to the right place, is because we don't know what the haul is. We do not know ourselves. We throw out our chest, lift up our head, perch upon an appropriate elevation, and emit a long reverberating crow that wakes up the neighborhood. That's our resolution, and we are proud of it. It carried a tremendous distance—through the air. But immediately after, we hop down from our perch and begin pecking away at the same old straw and

cinders. We go back to the same old lazy ways, the same old crowd, the same old thoughts and actions.

Yet we have a vague idea that we are not doing quite as we promised ourselves and the world at large. But we know exactly why *that* is. Suppose it is our studies we were going to do better in. Why are we not doing better? "Oh, it's too hot to study!" Or, "I haven't got my books yet;" or, "Say, I'd do all right only for that Greek!"—or, "Gee, but the studies in our class are dry!"

Suppose, again, it is a bad crowd we are going with. We are going to quit it. We don't. Why not? "Oh, Bill called for me, and I couldn't refuse." Or, "They need me on their team." Or, "We're only going to the picture show."

See where we go to lay the blame for our failure to go straight? On something or somebody *outside* of ourselves every time. And the real trouble is where we never think of looking for it—*inside* of us. Something is wrong at the very center, where the "I" lives, and we never give it a thought.

If Jack Doolittle will only look there, he will soon find that he has no courage, no

driving power, no attack, no fighting pluck in him. His resolution was nothing but a loud crow, and in his flabby defeat he is as dead as a log except for the groans he lets out, groans about somebody else or something else, but never about the thing for which they should be given—himself.

And it will be the same in the matter of bad habits. He is always going to be better, but never actually is better. Why? He has not one good fight left in him. The old thoughts, desires, actions, push him over as they always did. Any time they wish to tramp on him they can tramp; can have him whenever they whistle for him; go as far as they like with him. And this is the end of the young vocal hero who just now shot the red-hot challenge, "I will do better this year." He has not lasted an hour.

If, my dear boys, you want to get out of this class Z, if you want to be what you proclaim you are going to be, start in right away and find out what kind of boy you are on the inside. That's where the trouble is. Don't blame anybody else. You are the one to get after. Do a little detective work on yourself, and you will be surprised at the catch you will make. Are you lazy?

An evader of present work? A shifter of present burdens? A boy who slinks away from a difficulty, mumbling excuses as he shuffles aside, furtively rolling a mental eye for the nearest hole to crawl through? Don't talk about "this year." Start now, this minute, and the year will take care of itself.

Are you in with the wrong crowd of boys, or thoughts or actions? Find this out, and start *now* to throw them out of every corner of your life, and out of the first window you come to. Don't be afraid of yourself, but begin the hauling process on yourself this minute. Don't proclaim yourself a finished hero and then quit at the very beginning of the struggle. But open the fight, not with a shout, but with a shot—a center shot right at yourself, and keep up that kind of fighting all the way through. After it is over you will not have breath enough to make the welkin ring with applause for yourself. But you will not need it. Your friends, your parents, your innermost heart, and, best of all, God, will approve your work as the work of a faithful servant.

I am running with the wrong crowd

[*See page 8.*

ON BAD UMPIRING

A heart that goeth two ways shall not have success—Ecclesiasticus.

THE most irritating thing in any game, and the thing most destructive of real interest, is a bad umpire. In football or in baseball, we all know how a bad umpire unnerves and discourages the players, disgusts the spectators, and turns the game from a battle into a burlesque. The best laid plans of mice and men are often ruined by the umpire.

Now, if we study this umpire question, we shall discover that there are three kinds of bad umpires. There is the stupid umpire. He means well, but he doesn't know the game, or he can't follow the plays quickly enough; or after he does see the play, he is timid about his decision. Then, when he sees he has bungled matters, he tries to "even up" on the next decision, until he has everything in one frenzied mess, himself included, and the final scene shows that as an umpire he is a very good sprinter.

Next we have the umpire who deliberately cheats—openly and horribly. He calls a fair ball a foul; he shows open prejudices against individuals or against a whole team—a Nero on the ball-field.

And finally, the umpire with a leaning. He secretly favors one side; at first sight apparently fair, but on closer inspection found to be "giving the edge" to his favorites. Every close decision goes to his friends, simply because he wishes them to win. And he manages to multiply and manufacture close decisions until his friends finally do win.

This is the umpire who makes us wild. The reason is that he adds sneaking, hypocrisy, to cheating, and we are to a great degree defenseless. We may laugh at the stupid umpire and remove him; shake our fist in the cheating umpire's face and eliminate him. But with the last fellow we are helpless. We know him to be unfair, but he manipulates his lights and shadows—especially the shadows—so skilfully, that we are bewildered, baffled, and even while we are looking on, betrayed. And the deed is done with such an air of baby innocence that, in spite of the flat evidence, we wonder if after all we are only dreaming a dream.

We all realize this situation, because we have been in it. Not, let us hope, as umpires, but at least as the "umpired." We know how it feels, and we say to ourselves, "Well, anyway, I would never be as rotten an umpire as that fellow!"

And yet, my dear boys, every day, and right through each day, and in a game, or rather a battle for life and death much more important than any game of football or baseball, we are called upon to be umpires. We actually act as umpires, and we cannot avoid doing so. "What is the game?" you ask. It is the game, the battle of saving our soul. And the spectators are God, and the angels and saints.

Where is this battle fought, and when, and how? It is fought in our own souls, every day, every hour. A continual contest between good and evil goes on within us between the powers of light and the powers of darkness; between grace on one side and sin on the other. And we are the umpires.

Sin is the aggressor upon grace in our souls, the intruder breaking into our house, struggling to possess the field of our soul. Now, in this battle between grace and sin in our soul, grace should win always, sin always be defeated. Yet it

happens, perhaps often, that sin is not beaten, but comes out victorious. And why so? Because—

Our umpiring is bad.

Remember, we are the umpires in this all-important series of battles. We know that sin is an intruder, a destroyer, attacking the soul to wreck it. We know that against grace it ought never win a decision, and that when sin wins, every rule of the game of life is broken. If grace were given the proper chance, the chance God wants it to have, it would win against sin every time. Nevertheless grace is defeated. Why? Entirely through our decision. We umpire between sin and grace, and we let sin in—to win!

And in this contest we do not act as stupid umpires, either, but with our eyes wide open. We know all along what we are doing. We know we are cheating God. And it isn't open cheating in big things. We shall arrive at that stage later.

But we choose little things to start our cheating with. We give the edge to sin. We shade the decisions in sin's favor. We "lean" toward sin, and we do it so cleverly that we render the spectators helpless. God and the angels and the saints can do

nothing for us, because we put on an innocent face and assure them that we are really deciding as we see things. And after a sufficient number of shady decisions, and after we have thrown the game over to sin, and grace is lost to us, then we actually try to cheat ourselves into believing that we couldn't help it.

Apply all this to our everyday life and we shall see how true it is that we finally defeat God's grace by giving the edge, the little decisions, to the devil. For example, our prayers, morning and evening. We used to say them and consider it a matter of importance. But now they are gone almost altogether. By what process? By hurry and deliberate distraction and sly cutting down and mumbling; down to a few idiotic hand movements accompanied by an inarticulate groan, and we have our prayers whittled away to a point, and vanishing off the point. Giving the edge to sin!

Where are our old-time weekly Communions? Look over the list of excuses we have given ourselves for reducing these to monthly, and maybe bi-monthly Communions. "I forgot." "I was too tired." "Too big a crowd in the church." "I had

to work." "I'll go next week." And "next week" hasn't arrived yet.

Then our companions: Why have they become steadily of a deteriorating grade? "Oh, I let them talk. They can't hurt me. I'd like to see them get me off the track!" That is precisely why they do get us off the track, because we "like to see them do it." But in the beginning we gave them the edge. And in the end, after our once powerful engine has jumped the track and rolled into the ditch, the devil gives us a horse-laugh.

And when the year's end comes, why the "flunks?" Trace them back and we shall see they all began in little lazinesses, loppings off of home-study, little evenings out; little postponements; little misunderstandings the next day at class; little "explanations" at home and to the professor, until finally we could explain anything and everything. And *were* explaining them, too.

Again, why this ever-increasing independence of, even arrogance toward, our parents? Because we let in the little idea some time back that as we grow large they grow small, and as we go up they have to go down.

And why the constant increase in strength

of our temptations? Because we gave the edge to the notion that we could read whatever we pleased; look at whatever we pleased; go wherever we pleased. "It isn't a mortal sin, is it?" we asked, with a triumphant contempt of all the insistent warnings of conscience. And conscience finally did what we, in our underhand way, were ordering it to do all the time—it shut up. A dead conscience!

Always giving the edge, we finally gave the game to sin. Our umpiring is false, unfair; and worst of all, hypocritical, disgusting God and making Him reject us.

If we are hovering anywhere near this kind of umpiring, my dear boys, if we find ourselves giving the little decisions to the devil, and at the same time are making constant excuses to ourselves that we are perfectly just, let us make up our minds to stop it. Be square on this point, fearless, candid. Decide the case as we see it, but be sure to *see it*. There is where we lose—we refuse to see the play. After all, this affected blindness, this double-dealing of ours, this sly cheating of God, whom does it hurt in the long run? Only ourselves. We can never win at this game. For "a heart that goeth two ways shall not have success."

IMITATING TOWSER

YOU recollect the fable of the dog and the piece of meat. Towser, carrying a fine, fresh piece of meat in his mouth, was crossing a plank over a stream, and he looked down. There, in the dimpling water, he sees another piece of meat which looks much fresher, redder, juicier, than the old worn out thing he is carrying. And he makes a quick bite at piece number two. Result—a pensive Towser!

"Well," we say, "that's just like a dog—naturally foolish. Being a dog, he has no sense and he never will have any."

Then why the fable? If Towser never will have sense, what's the use of talking about his blunder?

Because the man who wrote that fable did not really mean it for Towser at all. He was shrewdly pointing out a class of people, and some boys among them, who give remarkably clever imitations of Towser's little act for a whole life-time and never seem to think there is anything in the least wrong with it.

What kind of boy is it, you ask, who imitates Towser?

It is the boy who always wants something he hasn't got. He is always living in the future, and when that comes, he is still dissatisfied, keeps looking ahead, thinking ahead, living ahead of himself all the time. At first he lives ahead of himself only an hour or two. With practice he stretches it to twenty-four hours, then to weeks, months, years, until his mind is reduced to a mere thread, which he uses to cast for impossible fish that he thinks he sees.

And among boys there are some familiar types of this living ahead of oneself. First, we may mention the Anxious Child. Take this boy on a school day, for example, and at nine o'clock he is thinking of recess, or worrying whether he is going to be asked next to recite, or whether he will be asked at all. Recess comes, he thinks of the noon hour. And during the afternoon recitations he is always on his mark, ready for a dash for the exits. He looks at his watch feverishly every two minutes. How time drags! If he could only get behind time, as it were, and push it ahead to the coming ball game, or tennis tournament, or skating party! Meantime, his mind is adrift from

the real work going on right before him. He has only a hazy notion of a voice in a fog. Everything two hours ahead is perfectly clear in his mind, but everything here and now is one boresome blur. The rose of the future blooms fragrantly, but the thorn of the present enters his flesh.

And after the horrible two hours are killed, when the game comes what do we find? The same restlessness in the boy. He wants a new game, or else the game isn't going the way it should. This way isn't right. Some thing just ahead is the right thing. And what is the outcome of it all? A peevish, fretful, nervous, unhappy boy—the Anxious Child.

The Athlete Child is a higher development along the same lines. For the Athlete Child there is generally only one day in the week, the day of the football game. All his time is condensed into that great day. All roads lead to that Rome of his thoughts, and they never lead away from it. At school all day, at home making motions over his books, he is thinking only of the day of the next game—what kind of weather it will be; how heavy the other fellows will average; whether the field will be dry; how Billy Hotstuff's ankle will hold

out; how He, Himself, will star and "show up" his opponent.

And as he stares at his books, supposedly getting up his work for next day, he doesn't see a line of the text because the football line gets in between him and the book—and that is the line he studies. He sees himself going around the end for a long run "straight-arming" the enemy one by one, dashing through the goal to the accompaniment of nine frenzied 'Rahs for Tommie Gray. All this a week hence! Suddenly he hears a voice, his father's:

"Time to go to bed, Tom. Have you got your lessons?"

"Sure, Pop!" There is only one lesson for Tommie. And after dreaming all day, he actually has the nerve to go to bed and sleep all night.

But the highest achievement in the type is reached when the boy has so developed that he lives in but two periods in the year—the Christmas holidays and the summer vacations. This is the classic product in the gentle art of living ahead of oneself. In the fall months the question ever is—"How long till Christmas?" After that period, "When will vacation begin?" For such a boy single days of play pass by as

straws on a stream. His big golden galleons, his stately ships of the line are those thoroughbred ocean hounds, the Vacation Times. "When does school close? How long will the vacation last?" These are the two important life-matters for him. These fixed, he settles into a profound drowse and sees things in the rosy future that make De Quincey's opium dreams seem pale and bloodless.

"Oh, the old swimmin' hole! Ain't the water great!" Anyone can tell he isn't a grammar specialist. Six months ahead of time he has had all-day swims in the "swimmin' hole;" has dived hundreds of times off every high spot around it; lolled in the cool water by the hour.

"And those baseball games, tennis games, long auto drives! Yum, yum!"

He hears mysterious voices, though not like the voices that called Joan of Arc. Her voices called her to work. These invariably and imperatively summon him to play.

"Get your fishing tackle and go up Nevin's brook for trout." Whole days he goes up Nevin's brook, and incidentally "goes up" in his studies.

"Bring out your canoe, and we'll take a river trip." Happy weeks drifting with the current down the river! He lies back and hears the ripples gurgling around the keel, feels the velvet air caressing his upturned face, stirring his raven hair: trails his languid hand in the sliding water. Green trees on either bank, and the blue sky away up above, and the rich sun! What a fine tan he is putting on! Gee, but he's getting strong, and he feels even like writing poetry.

The class-room disappears. Dreamy Dan's desk turns into a fishing dock, his pen into a fishing pole; his open books into white sails dotting the waters; the aisle into a silver stream; the students into trees; the walls and blackboards into low, blue hills in the distance. Oh, the scenery!

And when exams come along, old Dreamy Dan gives the class an exhibition of some real gurgling. Chilly days for Dan, while he tears at the same old raven locks for an idea, and his hand feels paralyzed as his downturned face meets the long, long stretches of foolscap ("foolscap" is right) and he wonders how in the world he'll ever cover all that desert tract with some writing. And a beautiful tan on his head, which feels

like leather! And afterwards, with dad at home—oh, the scenery!

What must be the practical outcome of this kind of existence? All of us can answer that there is none. A boy of this character, with these ideals, will never do real work. Work is done *now*, not an hour, a week from now. It is accomplished by close attention to detail, and the dreamer in futures can never be the doer in the present. And who will trust such a boy? We all judge of the future ability of a man by his present power. And our boy who lives in the future will be found to be a poor, inaccurate, vague, effortless producer of today's work.

Such a boy, too, is easily tempted to sin. He will yield to temptation now, because he is going to be better next week. "Yes," he will admit, "I *am* a little careless right now, but just you watch me next month, and you'll see the improvement." Such resolves as these fill the devil with joy. He will trade a hundred "next month" resolutions for one yielding to temptation "now." Because he knows that if he wins now he will win more easily next week.

The best way, the only way to build a future, either for this world or the next, is to build a present. There is no future. When

it comes it isn't the future, and before it comes it doesn't exist at all. Be sensible about this idea, and learn it young. Do each piece of work carefully, cautiously, cleanly, with full detail. Push aside the dreams, the "Going-to-be," the "Wait-and-see" and the "Watch-me-later." Because the "Going-to-be's" of youth are inevitably the "Might-have-been's" of manhood.

ON SOWING WILD OATS

HERE is a phrase that has done an incalculable amount of harm—"sowing wild oats." It is applied to youth, generally with a limited application to growing boys and young men. What does it mean? It is supposed to be a polite way of expressing the idea of a dissipated life, of years uncontrolled by any of the Ten Commandments. And to the "initiated," it always carries with it the underlying notion of a bad life.

In its practical application and interpretation, therefore, it is a phrase that is used to condone offenses against God; to minimize sin; to make light of impurity; to pretend that uncleanness is a necessary thing in every young life—a thing to be expected, tolerated, overlooked, excused. Often enough we hear out of the mouth of persons who pose as connoisseurs of life, such talk as this: "Oh, So-and-so is wild, dissipated, a rake. But he is only sowing his wild oats. He'll turn out well, settle down and be a good man."

The effect of this teaching upon the growing boy is deadly. He hears it lightly said that what he thought was hideous and disgraceful is not so bad after all. He is practically told that impurity is the usual preliminary to the real work of life; a stage of growth through which a boy normally goes; a prerequisite to right living; a discordant, yet necessary, overture to the harmony of manhood's years; the common foundation on which everybody builds. And the listening boy is weak; perhaps already fallen, but struggling to get up from the mire. He hears this phrase, an encouragement to him to go ahead with his sin. The devil puts the catchword into his hands as an excuse for his habits: "Go on. Sow your wild oats. You'll be all right in the end. You'll settle down later." And the youth goes on.

Now is this right? "No," you will tell me, "it isn't right." It is directly against the law of God, binding in youth no less than in age. And it is certain to be cursed in the end. From our earliest to our latest years, God is the one who tells us what to do, and not these experimenters with virtue.

But even apart from our faith, is there a single grain of reason in this advice to

"sow wild oats?" Is there a shred of business sense, a spark of ordinary prudence in such a method of going about the great affair of our soul's salvation? Saving our soul is a business proposition. Is there anything like a business proposition in a boy's "sowing wild oats?"

What does the "wild oats" idea mean? It means that about the early part of your life you needn't care. "Go ahead at any pace you choose. Follow passion, be anything you like in thought, in word, in action. Be impure, obey your animal instincts. All will be well later on. You can easily stop whenever you have a mind to."

I say there is not a particle of business sense in this idea. To throw away the early beginnings of your life, your youth, your young strength—and the rest will be all right—is this business?

Put the idea into any business you happen to think of, and see how it works out. For example, as we are talking of "wild oats," the business of farming. Do you ever notice the successful farmer beginning his cultivation by letting weeds grow all over his farm? The farmer nowadays is looked on as a fool for neglecting any corner of his

land. He watches every inch of it all the time. You will find none of *his* land set aside for a "wild oats" crop.

In architecture and building: When the plans are made for a skyscraper, or a bridge, is it not the foundations that are the great source of worry? And when the building begins, do you not see that it is rock they begin on and not swamp? And if they cannot find the rock, they put it there, or its equivalent. Suppose you saw the contractor at work on your house, starting it with a foundation of hay, old weeds, broken pop-bottles, and decayed rags. I think I hear you saying—"Not for my house!"

In cattle raising, follow this rule: Don't bother about the young colts, or calves. Let them run loose, tear themselves up on the barb-wire fences, run wild across boulders and into deep streams. And any kind of stagnant water will do them for drink. They'll grow up all right later.

In business—say a retail grocery: Don't mind the business at the start. Let customers wander wherever they care to, take whatever they want. These are only losses at the opening. Don't watch anything. Let the store windows get as greasy as they please; the vegetable display in front stay

there till it rots. The smell will attract customers. Yes, flies and scavengers! But the business will be fine "later on."

In medicine: Always begin by paying not the least attention to the child. Microbes in his lungs? "Why, yes. We put them there; had the child infected with them. Don't worry. He will be all right. He'll breathe beautifully when he gets older."

But the thing develops into farce! We could go on forever and show that the one elementary thing that simply *must* be done in any business that seeks success is to start right, to make a good beginning.

In any business but the business of the soul! Here all rules go by the board. In the matter of cabbages or hogs or chimneys or freight cars or shoes, the start is everything. But in the great matter of building your soul up to heaven make as poor a start as you possibly can. Here the beginning isn't half the work. It isn't any of the work. The worse the beginning, the surer the success "later on." In the big business of saving your soul, break every rule that holds in all other business, and you are sure to win. Open your life-work by doing what the devil, the world and the flesh tell you, and you will have the very

best practice at doing what God tells you "later on." Christ built His Church upon a rock. The "wild oats" theory tells you that if you would build a lofty soul, found it upon a garbage heap.

The boy who is fooled into beginning his life as a follower of the "wild oats" idea will regret it as long as he can regret anything. He has begun wrong, and a shaky foundation always threatens the building that is upon it. True, he may hold the building up, but it will be with ugly props or binding braces. At his best he will lack always the purest touch of beauty in his soul, always miss the serenity of spirit that dwells with the pure of heart.

And what of the vast army of young souls who never build at all? What of the unnumbered thousands who have given up the struggle and sunk into the depths of a life of sin? Ask any one of these why he is down. He will tell you that the longer he is in the clutch of habit the less able is he to stop. After a while he will stop, but it will not be when he has "a mind to." It will be when he hasn't any mind at all. After a while he will "settle down," but under a mound of earth. And he'll keep settling there a long while—his body that should have been the temple of the Holy Ghost. And his soul?

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And Tobias said to his son: "Hear, my son, the words of my mouth, and lay them as a foundation in thy heart.

"When God shall take my soul, thou shalt bury my body, and thou shalt honor thy mother all the days of her life."—Tobias 4.

THINKING himself near to death, Tobias called to him his son, the young Tobias, and gave him many counsels to be kept "as a foundation in his heart." And the very first stone of that foundation was, after honoring his father's body with a fitting burial, that he should honor his mother all the days of her life.

It was the first thing the old man had learned as a boy. And at the end of a long life full of experience, it led everything he had to say. His practice had confirmed the theory. He had found out that this was the way to live—to honor father and mother all the days of their life.

Have we learned this lesson?

"Surely," we answer. "We learned it the first thing."

Yes, the theory of it. But have we learned it, are we learning it in practice?

Question: You say you love your parents?

Everyboy (very much surprised): Why, yes, of course. (Aside) Silly question!

Question: But how do you prove that?

Everyboy: Prove it? You insult me! If my father or mother were to die, you would see how I would cry. Believe me, I'd make a terrible noise.

And if we went over the whole city with pencil and paper, and took down all the answers, we should get all "Ayes" without a doubt. The sentiment is unanimous—in theory.

But in practice? For this, I am afraid, we shall have to do a bit of sleuthing, and unobserved, make a house to house canvass. Thus we shall be enabled to study Everyboy in his native haunts, and with the spotlight turned off; to catch him napping, in short. After a week or so of experiment and research, we obtain the following rather remarkable results:

Exhibit A. The case of a sweet-voiced, mild-mannered, almost sad-eyed child, who spoke in low musical tones; unobtrusively but alertly attentive to older folk not his

relatives, and who doffed his hat to the younger ladies with an easy grace that was truly—to borrow a bromide—Chesterfieldian. All this while strictly on exhibition.

Later, at home. Striking reversal of form. The youth enters at the dinner hour. "What! Dinner not ready!"—"Is that all we're going to have for dinner? I'll starve on this stuff!"—"Say, somebody stole my tie. I'll punch your head, Jack." (Jack is a younger brother.) "Here, take this kid out of here," referring to a sister, aged three, "or I'll slap her out."—"I'm going out tonight to Baker's party. Yes, I am. I don't care what you or anyone else says. If I can't be treated like a man around here, I'll go where I will be. I'll get out of this prison and go boarding. I don't have to stay in this old place." He roars, growls, kicks things around, slams doors, dares and defies. Everyone in the house hushes up. No use in trying to talk; the thunder is too loud.

In the animal shows, you have seen the lion in his cage and the attendants skip in and out of that cage with catlike speed, trying to get away from the "noble beast." Yes, he looks all right, but when he forgets he is on exhibition the animal bites. So here.

The parents are silent lest their son inflict even more deadly wounds than he has already inflicted upon their heart.

Exhibit A is most educational. We have named it "The Bluffer."

Exhibit B. "The Teaser." A trifle more delicate in texture, but quite an interesting display. The Teaser, in the open, is an artless, tender, manly, cheerful-spirited young fellow; takes whatever comes along; never asks for anything; most easily satisfied. "Any old thing is good enough for me," is his motto.

In captivity, in other words at home, the work-side of the beautiful tapestry jumps into sudden view.

"Ma, can't I get a new suit of clothes? Can't I? Hey? All the other boys have new suits. Can't I get one? Hey, ma? Say, ma" (it reads like poetry) "can't I get a suit like Tom Gary's?"

Told to go to the store. "Oh, why can't Jack go? I'm tired. Gee, my foot hurts something terrible." (Business of a hideous limp). "Aw, let Jack go!"

"Pa, will you give me a quarter? I want to go to the nickel show.—Yes, I do too need a quarter, because I want to get an ice-cream soda after it. Say, pa, will you give me a quarter? Huh?"

And thus the Teaser keeps up his whine, his begging, his reiterations, often following a long period of whining with the snuffles and the pouts and that tears-in-the-voice effect which would be worth a fortune in vaudeville. He wins at home nearly every time, because, like a mosquito, he buzzes, and hums, and sinks in his petty little stings till he gets what he wants. It's an awfully pleasant home where the Teaser works.

Looking too long at the Teaser exhibit makes one feel weak. So let us move on, my friends, to what is perhaps the most artistic of all the booths. We now stand before

Exhibit C. "The Smooth Boy." The study of this exhibit draws us almost into the intellectual field. There is finer shading in this picture, and the perspective is managed much more cleverly. While at large, the smooth boy poses as a kind of pleasant mystery. He sits back and smiles, with a smile which insinuates, "Go on with the game, but no matter how fast you go you will always find me just a little in the lead. I've been through it all long ago." He inclines to be silent, with a faint hint of patronizing perfuming the air about him.

He takes a back seat, with the implication that he wishes to give the others a chance to get near the things he has all but tired of. He never sits so far back, though, but that he is within easy reach of any good things that are handed out. He inclines to silence, but of that golden kind which hides a wealth of experience. He is also a good listener and doesn't seem at all bored by the most pathetic platitudes.

All this, quietly persevered in, brings results. His very mystery attracts; his gentle silence and patient self-effacement magnetize. His admirers think him a wizard.

In the home circle, too, his wizardry persists. He lives just at the edge of the family circle, in the penumbra, so to speak, where a single move can carry him into deep shadow. When any commands are to be given, he sees them coming and instantly becomes invisible. When he scents work ahead, he gum-shoes out of the way, behind the heavy interference of the rest of the family. Father and mother have to pass everyone else in the house to get to him.

He doesn't ask if he can go anywhere, or do anything he has his mind set on. He simply waits till no one is looking, and goes

ahead and does it. If it happens that he is told not to do a certain thing, he answers deferentially, "Surely not"—and then forgets that anything has been said, and does it if he pleases. He really pities his parents. They are so old-fashioned, behind the times, such fogies. There isn't the least use in wasting time trying to get them to understand, to bring them up to date. So he considers them hopeless and bears with them. On their part, they feel they have only an imitation for a son, a vague figure that drifts into their vision and drifts out again, eluding every grasp they make at it. The boy is so smooth, so eel-like, that he slips away from every hand.

Personally, I prefer the Bluffer, or the Teaser, to the Smooth Boy. They at least give you a chance to catch on somewhere. But the Smooth Boy is so slippery that he nearly always fails to catch on to himself. And so, as a rule, he hurts himself most in the end. He begins by keeping all the others guessing; he finishes by having himself guessing.

The above is only my personal preference, though. Each one of you, my dear boys, is at perfect liberty to choose either of the others as the one he would like to boot first.

THE CANDY STORE DREAMER

ONE BLOWY day, with the wind at half a hurricane, I was tacking up Grand Avenue. Buffeted about, and beginning to feel tired with the effort, I became conscious of a yearning for shelter, when by a particularly fortunate zigzag I suddenly found the wind shut off. I had instinctively steered into the lee of a huge, sturdy sign before a candy-store, and with a second look I saw that I was not alone. Two little fellows had taken the cozy corner of the sign, and, ensconced in a blissful seclusion, had turned their backs upon the street, forgotten the hurly-burly and the screaming storm, and with their little faces against the window were looking into a paradise.

A golden pool of molasses candy, surrounded by soft, crumbly hills of chocolates; wide meadows of delicious caramels divided by well laid roads of shining peanut candy; a river of sugar cream winding about, over which, like trees, rose tall, variegated sticks of sweetness, in the distance, white heaps of

powdery marshmallows, like a snow-capped mountain range encircling a fertile valley—such was the beautiful vision that pierced and enchanted the souls of young Tom and Jack and made them forget the world.

"Hello!" I shouted, not yet used to the quiet after the whirl without. "Nice in here, isn't it?"

"Great!" they murmured, faces still glued to the glass, fingers in mouths to relieve the inner pain that gnawed their vitals.

"Say," I asked, "if you boys could get on the other side of that pane of glass, do you think you could make away with the whole lot of it?"

They whirled about together. "You bet we could!" they sang in unison, with a note of chipper certainty in their voices, a ring of assurance that added to the spoken words the footnote, "We could die eating candy, if we only had the chance."

Then they turned to the window again, the ecstatic look came back into their faces, and they stood rooted in delight. Their dream of life was complete, standing before the candy window and waiting for their chance.

We smile at Tom and Jack as we reflect

how very far from their hoped-for chance at the candy the standing and the waiting will land them. We smile at them—and yet do we not ourselves do a decidedly similar thing? Does not every boy and every young man perform more or less *a la* Tom and Jack? At home, at school, secluded from the blustering storms, unmindful of the real terrors of earth's noises, with our backs to the world, do not all of us spend some years looking into a dream window of some supposed future?

Each has his own particular style of window to look at. All of us are in greater or less degree destined to be mistaken in what we image there. And yet in youth we are as fearless and as expectant of the future as one day perhaps we shall be anxious and regretful for the past.

Nor do I contend that it is entirely wrong to do this. It is in human nature, especially in young human nature, to hope for the impossible, to reach out for the impracticable, to build castles in the air. This is merely the sign that man is made for ultimately greater things than he will ever attain to here. It is a hint of his real power.

But the danger of the dream stage is that

at the crisis of life the boy may not wake up from the dream, may never realize that he is looking in at the wrong window. He locates in front of the candy-store window in early life, and when the time comes for him to move on, all the king's horses will not budge him. His first dream is his last. With fatal obstinancy he decides once and forever for the candy window, and he will never look at another. And the boy who is building up for himself a candy-store future is making one of the worst mistakes that youth makes in this world.

This is the boy who expects to attain results without effort. He will not have to go out to meet success. Success runs up to meet him. He sees his ripe talents, his faultless manners, his apt address, sweeping the field. He simply *has* to win. It will be easy for him—a light task, sugar-sweet.

Or perhaps he sees some work ahead, and he will do a little of that well. Merely a sample it will be, however, to advertise his prowess. After people see who he really is, they will come right up and hand him things. Whereupon he will launch into society. He will be a hero, moving through the throngs of stunned admirers with that graciousness and elegance and easy affa-

bility, yet with that superior dignity and conscious power which only gods and heroes possess. He sees himself acclaimed in open compliment, or ill-concealed whisper, or cleverly veiled flattery, or "tumultuous applause." Some will be tactless enough to praise him to his face. He will endure that. Others will foolishly endeavor to imitate him. He will pity that. Others will look to him as sun-worshippers look to their god—with awe and reverent adoration. This is the intelligent way to applaud. He will accept this.

Then he thinks of himself in detail, and he sees himself moving past every barrier, climbing every height, until he has reached the topmost pinnacle of social success.

He sees himself in his motor car—a ten thousand dollar car at the cheapest—bowling luxuriously along the boulevard, taking the fresh air and the scenery as he moves ahead, leaving the dust and bewilderment to his natural inferiors.

He sees himself at the opera, entering well on toward the middle of the first act, preceded by a marvelously gowned lady carrying more than the usual diamonds. The opera is interrupted.

He sees himself on the golf links, a superb

figure in immaculate flannels, leaning elegantly on his brassie, then moving with magnificent muscular motion over the green, while the gallery gasps at his driving and gasps again at the man of Apollonian grace.

He sees himself among the distinguished of the land, at brilliant receptions, at "exclusive" functions, nonchalant, courtly, a poem of self-possession and tranquil ease. Crowds instinctively drift in his direction wherever he moves. Really, he cannot help it.

He sees himself the host at elaborate dinners planned as only the master plans, and carried out with the finest attention to detailed etiquette, yet not with the dullness that too often mars these feasts. His feasts are alive with pleasantry, a-sparkle with wit, gay with the keenest repartee, in which he always leads. Many celebrated personages attend, but, as satellites, they must be satisfied with simply attending, while the main planet shines.

These are some of the dreams of the candy-store future—dreams that start with only a pane of glass between the dreamer and the dream, but a pane that will turn into a wall of infinite thickness if the

dreamer does not awake and find he is looking in at the wrong window.

It is no harm for little Tom and Jack to dream of a candy future. They will shortly leave the window and forget it in their tussle with the storm. The harm lies in the refusal of big Tom and big Jack to wake up at the higher call, to move away from that dream window, to step forth and to do battle for some cause worthy of themselves and useful to the world around them.

ON COLD STORAGE PIETY

A SHORT time ago I met a young man, a friend, whom I had known very well as a boy at school. He had been a lively boy, verging even upon noisiness, but always regular at his Confessions and a frequent Communicant. After a little survey of the time since our last meeting, I asked him about his Communions.

"Oh," he answered, "I've cut down on all that, Father."

"What's the matter?" I inquired. "Doesn't it fit in any longer?"

"Yes, of course it fits in, but a fellow doesn't need all that so much after college."

"How do you reach that conclusion?" I asked in astonishment.

"Why, it's this way," he replied. "I did so much of it at school, went to Confession and Communion so often, that I don't have to go often now. I don't need it."

This young man had the idea that somewhere in his spiritual system he had stored away a lot of piety, like meat and eggs and poultry in a cold storage plant. And he

thought that by some spiritual jugglery, in which he was altogether passive and took no part at all, these provisions would feed themselves into his soul without his reaching out a hand for them.

"Oh, they're there, all right," he said to himself, "laid away safely on the shelves."

Where? Oh, he doesn't know. Somewhere—any old where.

Are the shelves easy to get at? He doesn't know; doesn't care, either. He doesn't intend to grope in after the provisions. He doesn't need to. They'll come out by themselves when they're wanted, like the cuckoo in the clock when the hour strikes. Just so, when temptations come, his old prayers, his old efforts, resistance, his past Confessions, Communions, will appear automatically, reassert their former sway, and like a night watchman, keep out the burglars while he goes right on sleeping.

In a word, he isn't a human being any more. He is a perpetual-motion machine. He used to have to make an effort to fight off temptation, but now some mechanical device will fight it off for him. It used to be difficult to be good. Now, with more temptations, it is easy.

This sort of boy always goes to the bad

at last. He is sure of himself; over confident; he can't lose. So he walks right into temptation, amid scenes and companions dangerous to faith, morals, decency even, until finally he finds himself in the mud, eating husks with the swine. The machine didn't seem to work in the way he guaranteed it. It didn't turn out the prayers, the watching, the fighting power, automatically. The old prayers did not ward off the new temptations. The old Confessions did not forgive the new sins. The cold storage plant burned down somehow—and very often keeps on burning in the next world.

The fact is, there is no such thing as cold storage piety. By constant attention, indeed, we do get strong in soul, but never so strong that we can stop strengthening, nourishing, repairing, defending. And the stronger we get, the more of these we need. A tree, for example, needs much more moisture, much more root space, more air space, when it is full grown than when it is a twig. A flower gets more attention when blooming than when it was first put in as a seed. And we have all heard the story of the man who trained his horse to go without eating, on the supposition that as a colt he had eaten all he would need for life.

The man did train the horse all right, but, as the story finishes, "as soon as he got used to going without eating, he died."

The same idea is borne out in our own body. The more powerful the human body, the more food it requires; the more it is growing, the more nourishment it requires; the harder it works, the more insistently it calls for the reinforcement of food, merely to sustain it. And when the body calls for no food, we know it is sick.

Young Jack has been out playing baseball all day, and after he gets home he hears the voice of mother calling: "Come to dinner, Jack."

"Thank you, Mama, but I've had dinner."

"Why, Jack, where did you get your dinner?"

"Oh, right here."

"Why, you've just come in. When could you have had dinner?"

"Oh, not today, Mama. But don't you recollect last Christmas? You gave me a lovely dinner."

Of course, Jack's mother becomes alarmed and calls in the *head* specialist.

But Jack was merely using the cold storage argument, the very same argument

that our friend we talked with at the beginning was using. And if it looks foolish enough in Jack to make his mother call for the doctor, how much help do you think a man needs when he deliberately applies the starvation theory to his soul instead of his body? Much more than anything else in the world does our soul need steady and frequent nourishing. For beyond anything we know here, it lives, grows, acts powerfully, swiftly and constantly, and with an incomparably more vivid and burning intensity than any flower or tree or animal. Constant care, therefore, and minute attention is needed to watch the fuel we furnish this fire, to measure the food we give this gigantic being.

And the soul itself must reach out for this nourishment. The tree and the flower and the animal may be fed, and forcibly fed. Not so with the soul. No outside force can drive it. The soul must itself reach out, and everything depends on that one first movement.

Our own everyday experience tells us that all this is true; that we are not ahead of the game. We know that we do not resist today's temptation merely with the prayer and the effort of yesterday. We know that

daily temptation must be met with a new spiritual strength, and that we cannot omit trying today simply because we have tried yesterday. "Give us this day our daily bread," we pray. Observe the repetition of the idea in the two words "day" and "daily." It must be food for every day, and new food, at that.

The saints tell us the same thing. St. Paul kept asking for prayers and help continually, lest he might become a castaway. St. Philip Neri, at the beginning of each day, asked the Lord to watch him carefully or he would certainly betray his Master.

Make up our minds now that in later life we are going to take even greater care of ourselves than when we were at home or school. In youth we are in a certain sense automatically taken care of; put into a routine in which holy thoughts, prayer, the power and beauty of virtue steadily meet us and influence us. Later it will be different as far as these external helps go. The guiding hand, the encouraging word, the warning glance, will to a great extent have disappeared. Much of the early scaffolding that was necessary in our upbuilding will be removed, as, indeed, God intends that it

should be removed. But the great buttresses and the sure foundation must remain forever through our whole life, every minute of the day and hour. God's hand should still overshadow us, His words of wisdom still guide us, His look still penetrate us through and through with its strength and its glory and its eternal sweetness.

GET A LADDER

PROFESSOR Walker understood his class. As a natural result, his class understood Professor Walker. If he praised his boys, which he wasn't a bit ashamed to do, or if he blamed them, which he did rapidly and efficiently, ninety-nine times out of a hundred the boys would see there was a reason for it. Results were plentiful.

But of course there came times when results were ragged. Heavy slumps in early fall and late spring forced the Professor into using tactics he didn't particularly relish, namely, strategy. And this was the one time out of a hundred his boys did *not* see the reason for the Professor's movements—until, say, a year or two afterward. Then they used to admit with a kind of plaintive humor that "Walker was some strategist."

It seemed so simple, too, his method. An example: One day, just after the first quarterly exams had revealed a frightful condition of mental rheumatics in his class,

Professor Walker came into class wearing what the romance writers call an "illuminated smile." It was a smile which, while indicating that its owner fully realized the desperate condition of affairs, also revealed that he had suddenly hit upon a complete solution—a sun-coming-from-behind-the clouds effect. It took the class off guard. They had expected him to enter in a Hamlet's soliloquy mood, with perhaps an added dash of King Lear in the storm scene, and they had braced themselves for the worst. But this entrance,

artless as the air
And candid as the skies,

knocked them right back of the knee-joints. They sagged heavily. The professor spoke.

"Boys, we are about to begin the second quarter of the school-year, and I wish here to call your attention to a branch we have woefully neglected during the past two months, and that is—"

"Greek!" said Al Thompson, in a weary voice.

"Mathematics!" groaned Tom Alberts and Bill McDermott, whose marks hovered around the freezing-point in geometry.

"Latin!" wailed a chorus in the corner,

who had offered as a class yell "What's the use of Latin?"

The Professor went on again.

"And that is—good English reading."

"What? Reading!" came from a dozen boys, striking attitudes after the manner of the actors in the denouement of a melodrama. The class writhed in agony, partly real.

If there is one thing more than another that a boy, or for that matter anybody else, hates, it is to be lectured upon reading. It really is taking an unfair advantage to unroll before any one the vasty deep of books, to stand him alone there on the shore, forcibly to adjust his head, photographer-fashion, until he can't miss seeing the horrible welter, and then to stand beside him and to say, "Look there, Ignorance!" Every one of those books becomes a family skeleton which he would like to forget, but isn't allowed to. He is caught in a state of red-handed stupidity and branded "Defective" on his forehead with an annihilating distinctness.

A boy, in particular, regards a list of books with the same cheerfulness that he shows in contemplating a row of headstones in a graveyard, and he dubs a lecture

on reading "high-brow stuff," which means that it is open to suspicion and very likely contempt.

But Professor Walker did not plan either a "lecture" or a list of books. He simply waited at the desk, and he waited not in vain.

"Professor," said Steve Pomeroy. Steve was the "cool boy" of the class, upon whom the others depended to put forth a smooth, even argument in a crisis. "This isn't the time to hit us on reading." (Murmurs of approval from the class.) "We're in an awful fix right now." (A low moan from the class.) "We've all got to make up after exams. There's a row of us went down in Latin." (Exemplifications in sections of the class.) "And think of those flunks in Greek!" ("Oh!" from the class.) "And the way we were bowled over in Mathematics!" ("Ah!" from the class.) "Besides, a lot of us are weak in branches. We want to come back, and we haven't the time for extras now."

("No time: no time!" echoes the class.)

Professor Walker heard Steve through and didn't notice the echoes at all. Placidly he took the cue furnished by the sufferers.

"On the contrary, Steve," (Professor Walker called his boys by their first names, which made them feel comfortable, even in their misery) "on the contrary, it is the very time to talk about reading. You want to do better, to 'come back' as you put it; to advance where you have been retreating, or to go faster where you have been doing well. How will you do this? By following the law for all advance, namely by doing more than the work that is absolutely required. In a game of baseball you don't absolutely have to make more than one base on a two-base hit. The umpire won't call you out for staying at first base, but the team and the crowd will call you worse than out if you try it. In football you don't have to make more than ten yards to keep the ball. But if you went your ten yards and then, gently placing the ball on the chalk-line, waited for the other team to come up and shake hands with you, imagine what the young ladies waving pennants in the grand stand would think of you. A perfect Niagara of their scorn would fall on you, to say nothing of the whirlpool below, which the coach would have boiling up for you.

"Columbus didn't *have* to discover

America, Steve, but he did extra work and so achieved what he actually wanted to achieve. So with your mind. The class has partially lost it, according to their own confession. We shall rediscover it by going in for all the Latin, Mathematics and the rest, *plus* something which I name to be English Reading. We've simply got to do the first, and the only way to be sure of it is by adding on the second."

"Oh, now he's going to make us wade through a lot of that high-brow stuff!" wailed Teddy Quinn, in a piercing aside.

"Well, suppose even that," the Professor said, answering the wail. "As long as one doesn't get in over one's ears——"

"Quinn'll never get in over his ears," interjected Ted's particular friend, Tom Campion.

"Ah, cancel it!" retorted Quinn.

"Hush, child," said Professor Walker.

"But anyhow, Professor, isn't Quinn more than half right?" said Steve Pomeroy, again taking up the cudgels. "Looking things squarely in the face, isn't this high-brow stuff dull at best? Dry discussions and dreary descriptions, and conversations about as interesting as poking up sand with a stick! I've tried it and I can't even

He sees himself "straight-arming" the enemy—

[*See page* 23.

understand a lot of it, much less get interested, and I've come to the conclusion that this old classic stuff is bound to be dull."

(Suppressed cheers from the class.)

"You have just now used two words, Steve," answered the Professor, "that I intended to call the class's attention to. I am glad you brought them in. They are the word 'old' and the word 'classic.' Evidently you meant them for slurs on any book. But are they? The word 'old,' for example: Isn't the very fact that a book *is* old one of its strongest titles to consideration? You hear of a business-house advertising itself as being in business for fifty years: of a bank 'established 1789;' of a university 'founded 1674,' all boldly announcing their age, proud to be 'old.'

"And we ourselves, do we not instinctively choose to deal with these in preference to young business-houses, young banks, young universities? Why? Precisely because they are 'old;' because they have stood the test of time and have proved themselves strong and dependable. Indeed, we call them 'old' because they aren't old at all. Other things around them have grown old and have disappeared, but they remain perennially young, better today

than ever. It is the same with 'old' books. They have stood all tests. And one of the tests of any good book is that it be not dull.

"Then the word 'classic.' We mean to insult a book when we call it a 'classic.' But do we? What is a classic? Something that has 'class' to it, that's all. We call a horse-race a classic when the entries are the pick of the country. Crowds flock to it, especially the experts in horses. It is the most interesting event of the year. We say a baseball team has 'class' when its players are individually skilful and have the intelligence to work together. If a player cannot do this, he retires to the 'bush league,' where he tries to get the skill he needs to enable him to return to where the 'class' is.

"It is the same with the books we call 'classics.' They are the books that have 'class,' that are interesting, and that draw the crowds of experts, the men who know things."

"But I don't want to be an expert," cried Eddie Porter in a voice which seemed near the breaking-point.

"Then leave school," calmly continued Professor Walker. "You wish to be a 'bush-leaguer.' Then get back into the bush and stay there picking weeds and eating acorns."

"Wuff!"—A delighted grunt from Joe Mulligan, which brought a withering glare from Eddie.

"But," interposed Al Lardner, "suppose we did wish to be experts, then why do we find those books dull, if you say they are interesting?"

"You don't find them dull," answered the Professor. "You find yourself dull. You take up a really fine book, an 'old classic,' and it shows you up. You are behind it and below it so far that you can't touch it. The book is all right—strong, swift, clever, but you are unable to tackle it. It gets by you."

"What'll we do, then?" asked Tom Gamble in pathetic desperation.

"For one thing," answered the Professor "do *not* stand around boo-hooing, with your little fists in your eyes, and saying 'It ran right around me!' Get after it, catch it, and make it stop for you. If you are below it, do what the bad small boy does for the jam. Reach up for it. Get a chair, if necessary, or a ladder; but get it.

"The big trouble with our reading is that we don't care to take any trouble with it. In that case, books will never be our friends. If we take no trouble for our

friends, we shall find that we have no friends.

"Suppose yourself on a visit to a friend. You enter, choose the easiest chair in the room and loll back. Enters the friend. You remain languidly seated, shake his hand in wearied fashion, utter not a word. Your friend, wondering, asks:

" 'What can I do for you?'

" 'I came to have you entertain me,' you answer. 'Please jump up on the piano, George, and make a funny noise with your feet on the keys. Then take that statuette and see if you can hit the house in that oil painting. Then whistle and dance for me. And after that please set the house on fire. I like fires. You do all the entertaining, George, and let it be spectacular. I'll sit here as long as I can and watch you.'

"It sounds absurd, doesn't it? Yet that is the way we read, often. We open the book and expect entertainment without effort. The only condition we put is that the entertainment be something crazy. We do not wish to meet ideas, people, characters. We look for Punch-and-Judy shows, Jacks-in-the-box, circus-parades, hair-breadth diversions succeeding each other with vaudevillian rapidity and vapid-

ity, and never daring to ask our mind to put forth any effort.

"A book is a friend. We must take trouble for it, go out to meet it, try to get its point of view. Therefore give it leisure, don't hurry it, become thoroughly acquainted with it, and we will find that like a real friend it improves upon acquaintance.

"As for us, too often we want only the 'pink sheet' or the 'green sheet' until our mind takes on their color. If anyone said to you, 'What a lovely pink complexion you have!' I imagine you would blush and resent the implication that you looked like a 'sissy.' And if anyone said, 'How green you look!' perhaps you would challenge him to a duel.

"Yet I am afraid that after basking in the reflections of the 'pink' and the 'green,' our minds very often take on those colors—or a horrible mixture of both—and become soft and stupid at the same time.

"I do not absolutely bar light reading, understand. But I say, do not let light reading bar you from the books that are worth while, the 'old classics,' which call for activity of mind, for virility, energy, drive; the books that preserve us from being like

expèctant infants with their little tongues out, waiting for somebody to feed them with nice, soft pap, and perfectly contented, if the pap is fed to them, to go on thus holding their little mouths open forever."

"Ouch!" said Tom Gamble, out loud.

"We shall now open our Ciceros," said the Professor, arctically.

THE MISFITS

WHEN a door is locked that leads into a room we wish to enter, what do we do? We do not at once take down the door nor remove the lock. We try to get a key that will fit the lock, and if the key does not fit we file the wards until it does fit.

When we are using a new baseball glove for the first time, breaking it in, we find that it does not hold the ball well. What do we do? We do not take a bat and pound the ball into a jelly, but we keep at the glove till we have worn a little pocket in it to receive the ball.

When we are dealing with a limb disjointed through some accident, we do not push the body around to make it adjust itself to the limb. We pull the limb back to the body and make it fall into place again.

"What is all this about?" you ask.

Well, if we view it at a certain angle, it is all about ourselves. We come into this world with but one great business to attend to, namely, to fit ourselves into life, rightly

to adjust ourselves to things as we find them. And sometimes we are like the key, active, aggressive, starting things: sometimes like the glove, passive, enduring severe blows: and again we are like the disjointed limb, which first suffers a strong pull to get it into place, and, after that, is energetic in the use of its full power.

But no matter which one of the three we happen to be imitating, we are always supposed to be doing our best to fit in with the situation. The sooner we learn this fundamental idea, and get to work to put it into practice, the more sense we reveal and the greater the amount of good we finally accomplish. One of the hardest criticisms we pass on a man in any line of work is, "He is a misfit." It implies absolute incompetence, hurtful to others as well as to himself.

"Yes, yes," puts in Happy Hal at this juncture. "Terrible thing, these misfit men. But I'm not a man yet, so you're not talking to me. Believe me, when I am a man I'll be no misfit. I needn't worry yet, though, as I'm only a college-boy." And Happy Hal whistles a bar or two of "College Chums."

Believe me, son, you're the very one I am

talking to. If you do not learn to fit in while you are at school, you needn't expect to fit in after your school is over. The "fitting in" idea is the very backbone of school training. It is more important than all the branches of study taken together, because it is the thing that gives these branches their meaning and their cohesive power. I have seen brilliant, original boys at school turn into miserable misfits in after years; and contrariwise, I have known boys who kept moving ahead at a snail's pace in their classes develop into men of astonishing power and momentum. The reason? The first kind of boys didn't fit in: the second did. Branches in a school are only the loose bricks. The "fitting in" ability is the mortar that holds those bricks together and builds them into a strong, dependable wall.

"But what does this 'fitting in' mean?" you ask. "I don't quite grasp the idea."

To put the idea compactly, "fitting in" means that in every essential duty, mental, moral, social, the boy is found in the right place. We may illustrate this idea by comparing what is expected from a boy with what is expected from each member, say, of a baseball team. Suppose in a game of ball there is a man on first base, one out,

and the batter hits a ball down to the short-stop. He takes the ball, tosses it to the second baseman, and the latter, whirling, sends the ball with perfect accuracy to first base. The ball shoots directly over the base and on, till stopped by the fence.

The first baseman—oh, where is he? They look around and discover him away over in front of the grand stand! After the inning, to the captain's heated demand for an explanation of this weird behavior, the baseman answers thus:

"Pardon me, but just as Crawford hit the ball, I observed that a lady in the grand-stand had dropped her score card into the field, and I went over to get it and hand it back to her."

There is a misfit! And no game, no enterprise of any kind has room for misfits. What is wanted, and what must be had before success is possible, is that each person in the system be in his proper place at all times, no matter what may be the temptation to leave it. That is "fitting in."

And so at school. A boy enters school and the first thing he notices is that a certain definite system is in force. Certain laws of conduct are laid down; the studies follow a fixed routine; so many days per

week of class, so many hours of preparation required; special methods of study followed; various customs in possession; an approved number of societies and organizations he may join and support. It is a full-fledged, time-tried system, and into this system he is supposed to fit.

Now, in this process he will be unlike the key and the glove and the disjointed limb. These, each in its own way, fit in, but chiefly through the application of some outside force to which they must respond. The school system applies a force from outside, it is true, but it isn't a compelling force. It is merely a persuasive, a moral, force, which means that if the boy makes up his mind not to respond to it he cannot be forced. Ultimately, therefore, it is his part to compel *himself*, to fit *himself* in.

And exactly here becomes evident the difference between a sensible student and a misfit. One boy looks, sees, understands the requirements, and immediately gets to work on himself. The other boy will not look, until somebody takes him by the back of the neck and holds his eye right over the difficulty. Then he shuts both eyes and they have to be pried open, like an oyster. Then he refuses to understand—too much

headwork—and even when he does understand, he declines to feed himself into the system of college life.

The result is that he has to be filed down, pounded, pulled into joint; at which the poor child sulks, kicks, paws up the floor, cries out that he is persecuted, and goes home and tells father and mother, especially mother, that he "isn't getting a square deal." All the while he feels like a martyr. From the deeps of his soul great sobs, like bubbles, burst on the surface, and he knows he could sing the beautiful ballad, "Nobody's Darling," with a pathos that would call for large handkerchiefs in the vast audience.

This is one boy who fits in nowhere at school, and, unless he learns, is wanted nowhere in the world.

Another kind of boy at school reminds one very much of little Tommie Smithers. Tommie stood at his front gate in the calm evening air, feeling great. He gave nine echoing "Rahs" for his father, nine for his mother, and nine for his sisters and his cousins and his aunts, closing with a ripping "Tiger" for the whole family.

Just then Tommie's father put his head out of the door and said:

"That's enough of that, Tommie. Come in, now, and get up the coal."

Tommie staggers back aghast, leans his head like a lily against the gate-post, and two real tears, like gems, stand in his eyes. After that magnificent vocal exhibition in the family praise, to be called upon to carry coal! "Father doesn't understand me, that's clear."

Any boys like this in college? Surely. They are the single-branch specialists, who choose one thing out of eight or nine that they are expected to do, and call it a college course. And the one thing they choose is noise-making. Only to hear their frenzied shouts at college games!

"Gee, but we have a wonderful team!"

Enthusiasm foams up, swirls around, splashes on all sides.

"Once more! Three cheers for Alma Mater! Tiger-r-r-r!" His jungle work is perfect.

Next morning Professor Driver asks him for his Latin Theme.

"What? You can't mean it!" And he turns upon the professor a look of gazelle-like surprise, slowly hardening into a stern, movie-hero resentment, as who should say,

"Me—the great Lung Artist, to dig into the obscurity of a Latin dictionary? What's this college coming to, anyway?"

He expects the college to fit him; imagines indeed, that he is conferring a favor on the school by his simple presence. As far as he can see, he is the only one around the place who has any "college spirit," and his general attitude toward the faculty plainly says, "They need me at this school."

The fact is the Rabid Rooter knows nothing of college spirit. Genuine college spirit means the spirit of the college, getting the college point of view, not on one thing, but on all the things the college considers essential to its training; and after that, not waiting to be hammered into position, but fitting ourselves in freely, though under due guidance.

Looking at matters thus, we see that we have to fit in correctly with studies, with companions, with the faculty, with the Ten Commandments, the Sacraments, and our devotions, as well as with the societies, the games, and all the customs of the school. All these, too, must be considered, not successively, but simultaneously. Each is to be adjusted always in view of the others, and emphasis laid on each accordingly.

For undue attention to, or neglect of, any one of them may mean failure in all.

To finish a college course successfully is to do a complicated piece of work, and no one can do it well but one who has the real desire to fit himself in, who studies the college spirit and adapts himself to it carefully. This done, he is certain of success. Otherwise he is a misfit.

ON A PRIEST'S VOCATION

I WISH to say something in this talk about vocation, and vocation to the priesthood. And I am not going to take the standpoint of exhorting or persuading you to the priesthood—though I certainly do think that every boy who ever plans a great and useful future for himself should look long and seriously at this career—but I am going to explain simply just what a priest's vocation means, just what kind of life a priest leads.

It is of course important for all Catholics to grasp the idea of the priesthood, and as a general thing they do. In sickness, and at the hour of death, when sin oppresses, and in every spiritual crisis, Catholics reach out for the priest and depend upon him. And from our own experience we know what the priest actually accomplishes for them. In our own case, for example, what should we be, morally and mentally, were it not for the priest? Outside of our father and mother, he is the closest person to us in the whole world.

It is plain their son is not interested in them

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And in some ways he is even closer to us than they—in those ways, namely, in which he takes the place and acts in the name of God, who is nearer to us than father or mother.

And yet, boys often do not get close enough to the priest, until it is late, maybe too late. Why is this? Well, shyness on the boy's part is sometimes one reason. But in many cases it is because we think the priest does not understand our case.

We have an idea that the priest knows the theory of things pretty well, but that he doesn't get near the actual concrete facts. In our ideas of a priest, we travel back to his boyhood, and we picture him as a pathetic, pale, remote, far-eyed individual, who has stood apart from boys and men ever since he was able to stand at all; who has been dreaming dreams and burrowing into books and praying in an incessant, but machine-like and gloomy manner that alienates our sympathy altogether. We fancy him as one who cannot see a joke at all, who looks with pain, or with a kind of sad toleration upon games, and frolics, and fun, and laughter, and all red-blooded life of whatever description.

This gray shadow befogs our whole idea

of a priest as we interpret him in his later life. For, we say, the boy is father of the man; and so the strange, mysterious boy develops into the sad, stern, remote man—a man, who doesn't grasp hard facts, but who, after being forced all his life into a groove, retaliates when he gets the chance by forcing everyone else into a similar groove.

Let me answer this idea at once, by saying that it is all wrong, absolutely contrary to the actual facts. Among the very happiest, the most care-free, most contented, red-blooded boys I knew were those who later became priests—boys who played all the games, and played them fiercely; who shouted and yelled and coached, and "kicked" on the umpire's decisions as wildly as any boy that ever lived. They fought their books, too, and generally won there, also. They were, moreover, boys who had their own original and decided ideas, and were not afraid to defend them in their clubs, or societies, or debates. In a word, whether in games or out of them, they were workers all the time, very much alive to everything that was going ahead, fully abreast of the first line of march, and always popular among their fellows.

"But," it will be urged, "is it not the truth right now, at any rate, that the priest is remote, no matter what he was as a boy? He cannot do as he likes; he must be always praying, always in a groove. He is alone—and his life is dull and uninteresting."

Let us take up these objections one by one.

"The priest cannot do as he likes."—Nobody can do as he likes. How could we trust any man who acted on the idea of doing as he liked? Such a man, in whatever sphere he works, is bound to turn out a selfish, intolerable tyrant, who will certainly ruin everything he touches. We love any man and trust him, exactly in proportion as he shows himself constant in doing what he doesn't like. And that is precisely why we love the priest and cling to him—because he has sworn, and has set himself to fulfill it, that he will never "do as he likes;" never put his personal preference above our own: that in our every emergency, we shall be his main interest; and that, at any cost of time or convenience or safety, he will devote his life to helping us to do as God likes.

"He must always be praying." So must everybody. Our Lord has told us that we must "pray always," and He did not limit

the command to priests. Each one must pray as best suits him, but we must always, in some sense, have our hearts lifted up to God. If it is meant, however, by "praying always" that the priest leads a strange, abstracted, moody, absent-minded life, nothing could be farther from the truth. No one is more alive and alert than the priest with his people.

"In a groove." Some people have the idea that priests are moulded like clay in a pottery; or lathe-turned, like furniture in a factory. They think that, if truth were told, priests have been brow-beaten into the life; from their youth up hounded by parents, nagged by relatives, labeled by candid friends. This is not true, either. Vocation works at last from the inside out, not from the outside in. True there is a "calling." But it is God that calls, and the final answer is freely given from the heart of the boy, with God's grace helping him. These two, and only these, do all the work of vocation. The priest chooses his life under the inspiration of grace, and he likes it, not because it is a "dull life," but—

Because, even from a human standpoint, it is the most interesting of all careers. The priest seems to be alone, and in a sense

he is—in the sense that he has no family ties, no exclusive friendships. But this results in the widest possible field of action for him, varied, constant, and in the highest degree, important. Apparently alone, he is in reality closely and sympathetically united with everyone under his charge. He knows that he alone can render to his people the only indispensable service they require—soul aid. His great interest is the souls of men.

If other men get interested in real estate, in gold mines, table salt, vegetable gardens, fish, trees, oil, street cars, what about the interest attaching to a human soul, a single one of which is more valuable, important, interesting, noble, than all those put together? Even the money kings see this at last, in a vague way. They tire of the coin stacks, and with a groping instinct of doing something better and higher, they turn philanthropists. They build libraries, hospitals, laboratories, with a new kind of eagerness in their older years. It is the tacit confession that the greatest work in the world is helping souls, and though they mess things up pretty badly, it comforts them to think that they are lifting themselves out of the sordid pit of selfishness.

No: the priest, though not rushing about

with visible speed, is nevertheless very much alive; very active, though not disturbed about it; very able, the only one on earth entirely able, to care for souls, though he does it without advertising; and very much attached to all souls, ready to lose his life for any one of them, if such a need arose.

These are facts we ought to know and upon which we ought to act. In our daily life we ought to feel that we can get close to the priest, confide in him, attach ourselves to him as to one who will easily understand us and kindly co-operate with us.

And if we think our vocation leads us to be priests, let us be assured it is a call to be warm-hearted and happy, not to be cold and dreary; to be near human life, not remote from it; to be interested, not to be dull. And finally it is a vocation in which the faithful worker cannot help laying up treasure for himself in heaven, the treasure of priceless souls that Christ has redeemed, and that the priest has cared for and brought back to Him.

ON ADDING MACHINES

And seek you not what you shall eat, or what you shall drink. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice.—St. Luke.

SEEKING is an impulse in man's nature, and it shows itself from our earliest years. The little girl, just past the crawling age, seeks a sawdust doll and clings to it tenaciously, until it is blackened and battered beyond recognition. Then she seeks to find out how dolly lived so long without food, and she drags the sawdust out of it.

The little boy seeks a toy engine, and after he has it and speeds it up and down its little track until he is weary, he seeks to find out what it is on the inside that makes the engine go. In a jiffy it is all apart.

And as youth comes in, this tendency, from an indeliberate, becomes a deliberate tendency. The boy, the young man, seeks to see things, to know things. He wishes to find out what the world is doing. He mingles with the crowd, craves new expe-

riences, runs after pleasures, desires to travel from place to place. And as he tires of one thing he seeks another.

With maturer years the seeking goes on. And now it is for power, or influence, or dignity. He has fewer objects of pursuit now and is more steady and less noisy in their quest, but the intensity of interest in the chase remains, becomes even more intense as it settles along deeper grooves.

Then age enters, and with it the search for repose, for undisturbed tranquillity, and the old man seeks to avoid the whirl just as ardently as the young man seeks to plunge into it.

From childhood to old age the seeking goes on, either for good or for evil. Always it will be one or the other, but the seeking impulse runs through everything. And in one way or another it is always for self, a continuous reaching out for something for ourselves.

"Is this right?" you will ask. "Does it not seem selfish to live a life such as this?"

Yes, it is selfish. But that does not mean that seeking is essentially wrong. For it is a part of God's plan that we should be selfish. He has judged us worth the great price of His blood, and it is His desire that

we appreciate our worth. Self-esteem, then, and self-seeking is a duty of our lives, but this must be followed out according to God's plan, and not according to our plan. Christ tells us that man is, and must be, a seeker, and while recognizing the two ways in which he seeks, tells us which of the two we must choose.

"Seek ye not what you shall eat or what you shall drink." That is to say: Not a sensual life, nor a "society" career, nor fine clothes, nor money, nor notoriety, is the proper object of our pursuit. But "seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice," God's service, God's law, and as much as we need of the other things will drift in of themselves.

That is the difference in the seeking. One way is to seek for ourselves and forget God. The other way is to seek God and trust Him to care for us after that. One of these ways is good, the other evil.

And this is the touchstone of self-knowledge. Do you wish to know what kind of boy you are, and how you stand with God? Then ask yourself what you are seeking. Toward which of these two lives are you leaning? What is the whole drift

of your actions? In which direction are you driving your soul?

To give ourselves the right answer to this question is not as easy as it seems. To find out what we actually are requires examination.

"But I do examine," you interrupt. "I examine my conscience as to my actions every month, every week, at Confession. Besides, at my night prayers, I count up my mistakes—when I don't forget. That is taking pretty good care to find myself out, don't you think so?"

Yes, it is what we might call good care, provided we count up all our mistakes. But did you ever notice while counting, that we are dealing with the same mistakes week after week, and month after month? They don't seem to change at all, those mistakes, some of them serious. Isn't that a sign that somewhere inside us there is a big mistake that we are failing to get, failing to seek even, because we suspect it is there and are partial to it?

It is a sure sign that in the constant and undiminished repetition of the same old sins we are losing a big fault somewhere, and that we really don't know ourselves as well as we thought we did. We think we

have done enough when we recount our sins, resolve to do better, and repeat this process indefinitely. But this isn't nearly enough. The truth is that the real work is hardly begun at the counting stage. We have been merely enumerating symptoms; we have not diagnosed the disease. Let me outline for you a few obvious little parables.

Oliver was a boy who had a garden to care for, and every morning he used to find a tiny ridge zigzagging all over the garden. And he took a spade and flattened out the ridge nicely. Sometimes in the afternoon there were more ridges. He smoothed these out, too. They were mole tracks. And he kept faithfully at the task for ninety-seven days, until the summer was over. Of course, Ollie's garden was over, long before.

Clara was a little girl who loved canary birds. If Clara didn't have a canary bird in the house she would slowly pine away. But every week, and sometimes twice a week, when she came downstairs in the morning, she would find in the cage only a bunch of yellow feathers. "Just think," she remarked to her mama at breakfast one morning, "tomorrow I shall be on my fourteenth canary!"

Mr. Reachup was a neighborhood grocer who had arrived at the cash-register stage. He also employed several clerks. And the cash-register didn't work well at all after a certain clerk had been hired. But Reachup was a very careful man. Each evening, just as the sun went down, he counted the cash, found exactly how much he was short, and noted it down. At any time he could tell the shortage off-hand, down to the very cent. Only yesterday he remarked proudly to one of his competitors that he had in the last four months detected the absence of three hundred and thirty-eight dollars and forty-eight cents.

Old Abner Wethershedd was a farmer, who raised sheep. But as fast as he raised them, someone else came along and "lifted" them. The process kept Abner busy, but he was a shrewd old farmer. He kept a strict up-to-date tally of all the missing sheep. Last week he remarked in his forceful, bucolic way that he'd be "hog-wallered ef he knew how he was a-goin' to keep that flock on its feet." He reckoned he'd "have to buy sheep to fill up them missin' numbers."

"Stop!" you will exclaim. "Don't go on. These are parables for the feeble-minded.

The answer is too easy. Anybody can count. What Oliver and Clara and the Messrs. Reachup and Wethershedd ought to do is to stop counting and go after the mole, and the cat, and the thief, and the wolf, that cause the trouble, and get them out of the way."

You have hit it, son. Absolutely the correct answer!

But when we seek to know ourselves; when we examine our faults with a view of, as we say, correcting ourselves, do we not follow a line of action very similar to theirs? We count the precise number of times we fall, and we keep on counting over and over again, rather proud of ourselves, too, that we are so accurate. But we never reduce the count, never get at the final root of the trouble. We tell lies so often and so often, but we balk at admitting that we are uncandid, sneaky in our soul; we disobey, but will not find out that we are ungrateful; we are impure, but stop at saying that we are selfish, sensual, animal in our make-up; we fail in our duties of studying, but will not concede that we are lazy "stallers," loafers; we go with evil companions, but resent the notion that we are cowards and easily led.

There is the real fault, the big mistake under all the other mistakes. We do not find out *why* we have to keep on with all this interminable counting. We never discover the great source of all this river of sins and mistakes. We call in the doctor, and when he simply says, "Yes, it is all clear; this is my fifty-third case of typhoid," we are fully satisfied with the treatment. We have the building tumbling about our heads time after time, but we go poking around in the ruins and think we are doing lovely if we count the bricks.

Anybody can count bricks, or dead canary birds, or mistakes. The thing to do is to get under all this counting and see what it is that causes it; what is the radical, the characteristic blunder we are making deep down under all this adding-machine stuff. Why do we fail to dig to this spot? Because we lack the courage; we are afraid it will hurt. We scotch the snake; we don't kill it. It curls up for awhile, and presently it uncoils and bites us again. And we label it: Bite No. 73.

If we ever wish to get over being mere "eaters and drinkers," to turn sincerely to "seek the kingdom of God and His justice," we shall begin right here to do it. "The

kingdom of God is within you." Inside of us is the place to begin, and so far inside that we strike at the tap-root of the trouble. Then we shall find that all the branches that shoot from it will shrivel up and die.

FOLLOWING THE MULE

DID you ever see a boy in class having a merry giggle all to himself, brimful of joy over a good joke he has just played on one of his schoolmates, and right in the middle of his joy, just as he begins to feel that he has got safely by with the contraband stuff, having the teacher suddenly pounce on him and drop a shell on him in the form of a good stiff penance?

You remember the instantaneous and heavy gloom that swept over that patch of sunshine on Dick's face; the ecstatic gurgle turned into a subterranean growl, and the triumphant whisper of victory keyed up to a long drawn, plaintive, "Oh, what did *I* do?"

In thirty seconds Dick's bubbling joy has been transformed into a twenty-ton grouch!

Did you ever see Bill playing ball—three of Bill's men on bases, and the fourth man follows with a clean home run? Oh, the world is made of ice cream and cake! Life is one long dream of joy! A minute afterward the umpire calls Bill out at first on a

close decision. Ouch! What a horrible noise!

Did you ever see our friend Harry at home? Time — night. Scene — a study table; books and papers scattered over it. Harry just settling down over his home work, his brain just getting into its stride. All at once a whistle outside, then an Indian yell, then the weird hoot of an owl— "Whoo-ee, whoo-ee!" Harry's gang! And they want Harry. And our Harry? He lifts up his head like a bird listening. Again the whistle, the yell, the ghostly "Whoo-ee!" The call of the wild. The books swim away into oblivion. Our boy reaches for his hat and coat and dashes for the exit. All currents reversed in three minutes.

Did you ever see Bill? Or Harry? Or Dick?

"Why, yes," most of us, perhaps, will have to say, "I've seen Bill. In fact, I believe I *am* Bill. I know I'm one of those three sometimes." Indeed, the description does fit us pretty closely, doesn't it? All of us, some time or other, seem to do things as unevenly as our three boys here, and we wonder why we do it. It surely does make them look like geese, but it must make us look just as funny, if we stop to think.

It is a good deal more than funny. This style of doing things is a big mistake and if often repeated it becomes a dangerous defect of character.

"How so?" you ask.

Well, at first thought, you will laugh at Bill as you would at a toy that works by a spring. Touch the spring from without, the toy jumps up, waves its arms and shuffles its feet. It has no inner guidance. "This is the answer," you will say. "Dick, Bill, Harry have no guide, no principle to work on."

But you will be mistaken. These boys have chosen a guide. What guide? Instinct—animal instinct, a most valuable gift in many ways, but one which needs very severe checking and tireless watching.

What is this instinct? It is the tendency in us which urges us to seek the agreeable and to avoid the disagreeable; to shun the difficult and to pursue the easy; to follow pleasure and pleasurable things and to avoid pain.

We can see at once that instinct has its good points; that it is, therefore, a genuine gift to us from God, meant to be a help to us all through our lives. It is the instinct of hunger that makes us take food, thus

keeping our body regularly supplied with what it needs. Instinct, too, it is that makes us pull our hand quickly out of the fire; jump aside from a speeding car; protect ourselves from too much cold or heat; avoid unhealthy spots; take rest as the body requires it.

In itself, then, instinct is our friend, and a friend we could not get along without. And the great reason is because it acts so quickly. If we had to reason ourselves out of all the dangers we encounter every day, we should long ago have been killed. But instinct is an electric block-signal for us, only operating with incredibly greater speed than any electric signal. And besides hurrying us out of danger, it guides us with the same motion into secure shelter. So that, in a sense, we may term instinct our life-saver.

At the same time, instinct can become our worst enemy. For two reasons: First, although it acts quickly, it acts *blindly*, and there is a part of man that must never act blindly. Second, it always acts *directly for the body*, and of itself does nothing for the soul. See where the danger is and where the check is needed? If instinct were allowed to go as it pleased, it would dash

blindly about, hunting up good things for the body, and push the soul into a corner from which it never could come out. So that the instinct of hunger would develop into a perpetual hunger; of thirst, into a perpetual thirst; of pleasure, into a perpetual desire for pleasant things, until life for us would come to be one mad and constant craving for bodily satisfaction.

We must keep a sharp eye on instinct, therefore; draw a boundary line for it, and see that it never oversteps that line. And where shall we draw that line? Right at the edge of reason, and as soon as instinct starts to get across that edge, push it back. Remember, we are not mere animals. Animals act entirely by instinct, automatically. God depends upon us and gives us His grace precisely to enable us to regulate our instincts by our reason and our will power. And just as soon as we fail to do this, a foolish or a sinful error is the result.

This is where Dick made his mistake in the class-room. He had his little joke, and had a barrel of fun out of it. Not so awful a matter, after all. A good joke, even though out of season, has its bright side. But untimely jokes call for timely punishment, and Dick knew it. Nevertheless, he

sends up a loud wail of agony. Why the agony? Not because the punishment was unfair. Dick's reason told him it was fair. But because Dick was hurt, and anything that hurts little Richard is absolutely naughty. Dick's instinct wins over his reason.

So with Bill. No one objects if Bill turn three handsprings when a man on his team sends the ball over the back fence with the bases full. That's legitimate instinct. But when the umpire calls Bill out at first, a moment later, why give an imitation of a hungry Bengal tiger looking for raw meat? Bill's feelings are jarred, that's all. And nobody should jar Willie.

The same with Harry. It is lovely, no doubt, to have our gang so yearn for us that they have to moan and shriek outside the house till they win us to them once again. Instinctively, Harry likes that, and he isn't all wrong, either, in liking it. But what about reason holding him to his duty at the books?

"Reason!" says Harry, with his finger in his mouth. "I never heard of it."

Watch any boy who travels along the road of mere feeling, instinct, and you will see a boy who is going to hurt himself

terribly. One minute he wants to see something. See it he will, at any cost. Another minute he wants to hear something. Hear it he will, no matter what reason says against it. He *must* associate with a certain boy, a certain crowd, no matter how dangerous to him. He *must* play a certain game, and throw everything aside for that. Instinct dominates him, owns him, drives him along ahead of it.

Finally, after a continuous surrender to the impulse of pleasure from without, he begins to surrender to the baser instincts from within, until his whole life is possessed with the single idea of pleasure. Is a thought tempting? He admits it. Is a desire alluring? He follows it. Is an action satisfying to the senses? He does it. He has only one rule of life: "Is it pleasant? I'll do it. Is it unpleasant? I'll not do it."

And then, when manhood comes, and this boy has become set, imbedded, enslaved to this sort of life, we find him defending his course. "Why did God give me the instinct," he says, "if He did not wish me to use it?"—like the patient for whom the doctor had prescribed strychnine, marked "Poison," to aid the heart action.

"Why did he give me this if I am not to use it?" says the patient, and swallows the whole box of tablets at once. Result—the heart stops altogether. Life goes out.

It is the same with instinct. Rightly used, in small doses, well regulated, it helps the soul. Wrongly used as the single principle of action, it is sure by little and little to kill the soul.

Instinct, my dear boys, is not our guide. Never trust it. Instinct is only the pack mule on our journey to heaven. It helps carry the baggage, but it isn't the leader of the expedition. It may start to run ahead whenever it spies a little grass, but we must drag it back and keep it from smashing our outfit. It may want to quit and lie down when a steep hill is to be climbed, but we must beat it and drive it on and up.

Our reason, our heart, our soul, God's grace and God's help, these are the leaders of our heavenly expedition. If we slight these, reject these, we dismiss the guides God has set us, and choose in their stead the leadership of the mule.

ON BUSINESS METHODS

TURNING over the advertising pages of a widely circulated weekly, I happened upon an advertisement about razor-strops. It ran something like this: "You have been having trouble with your razor. Let us send you free for ten days' trial this strop, and you'll forget about your razor. Return the strop if you don't like it—free. We couldn't afford to make this offer but that we are supremely confident that 99 out of 100 will never send it back. Sign this coupon, and send it. Write now!"

This advertisement struck me, not by reason of its originality, but as a representative sample of modern business methods. Thousands of advertisements are put forth every week based on the principle of the above—the principle of putting the goods into the very hand of the prospective buyer, but at no immediate cost to him. All that is asked is that he actually try the goods. He is gently hurried into such trial by the time limit of ten days or so given him. And

if the trial is made, the sale is made ninety-nine times out of a hundred. This is a good business method because it is satisfactory to the buyer. It approaches him honorably; does not try hypnotic tactics to force a sale. "We won't say a word," the distributors promise. "Just try the goods. They'll talk to you for us." And with a good article, only one out of a hundred will refuse to keep it.

From razor-strops to souls is not, we may think, an easy transition. It does seem rather a high leap, but let us take it on the run. Why not apply this strop idea to our souls? Why not use business methods in the only business worth while—the business of our salvation? "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Note the business atmosphere in these striking words. Loss, gain, profit, are the basic ideas in all the work upon our soul. "If you wish to save your soul," God says, "go into it as a business. Use business methods."

Does God Himself use business methods in His dealings with us? Yes, He does. Honorable, fair, broad, generous business methods. First of all, He offers to send you, free for trial, His grace, His gifts.

You need, as everyone needs, some special help. You are in trouble, in grief. Some dark cloud of sin hangs over you; some insistent temptation harasses you into despair; some furtive demon follows you about and fearfully catches at you. You are having trouble, and you would be free of it. Then use business methods. Let God send His grace to you. Return it if you will after you have tried it—*really tried it*. But once you have tried it, you will not return it, for you will find those other beautiful words singing in your heart: "My yoke is sweet, and My burden light."

This is all that God asks of us, to try His grace. "Taste and see how the Lord is sweet." And you will never after desire the fleshpots of Egypt.

Deep down in your soul you know that this is so—that the Lord is sweet. Go back to the time of the days of your young innocence. Compare that bright and happy time with the dark, dull years of sin that followed; the heavy groping of mind; the stifling oppression of heart; the ominous glare of hell lighting up in flashes the gloomy cavern of your soul, where evil thoughts move ceaselessly back and forth like demons in their native shades. And once upon a

time fresh sunlight was over everything here, and God so near that you could reach out and touch Him with your hand. Oh, if it could be so again!

It can be so again. "Though thy sins be red as scarlet, they shall be white as snow." Try the Lord again, and see how near He is. Taste and see how sweet. One step and we are in the presence of God once more. One word from us, the single word of acceptance of His grace, and all is well with us. Easy and simple and very businesslike it is, this shaking off trouble and saving our soul.

And what do we say to this offer God makes us? What is our attitude toward Him? Are we beginning to say, "Yes, we will try, but not now?" Ah, that is not business. "Write *now*," we are told by the advertiser. "Come now," God says, "Now is the acceptable time, the time of salvation." But we prefer to stay down in the mine, suffocating to death, and will "not now" enter the cage that is lowered to raise us to the top. "We will, but not now" means "We will, but we won't." God will have no further dealings with a mere pretender.

"It is too much trouble." Too much

trouble to get out of trouble? Too much trouble to be free, to be masters in our own house? Too much trouble to be with God?

The real difficulty with us is—lack of nerve, lack of that genuine pluck and spirited candor that will bring us to a business understanding with God. When the question comes up in our conscience of dealing fairly and above board with God, we go into a species of stage fright. We try to say yes and no in the same breath; we palter and haggle and shuffle around the truth; we say with our lips that we welcome God, but with our hearts that He is a hard master; we reach out our hand to take the offer God makes us, but at the same time reach back with our other hand so as not to miss anything the devil has to put into it.

This is the kind of treatment God hates and will not endure. If we are to do business with God, it is with Him and nobody else. And with Him it is all or nothing. We cannot serve two masters; it must be either one or the other, either God or the devil, and the boy who thinks he is sharp enough to have a little of one and a little of the other and get off safely with it, is a mere trickster who arouses the anger of

God and evokes the derisive contempt of the devil.

Be a boy who does an honorable business with God. He gives Himself entirely to you. You, in turn, see that you give yourself entirely to Him. Make a fair exchange —or none. Give the grace of God a real trial, even if only a ten days' trial. But don't try to cheat Him in the deal. Be a boy who dares to be himself, who dares to let God lead him; not a crying child whose mother has to drag it along the sidewalk, a ridiculous and uninviting object. Dare to walk right up to the deadly and widening chasm that separates you from happiness, and when you get there do not spend your time weakly looking down into the depths that make you dizzy. The leap you are to take is upward and forward. Then follow the climber's law: Look upward and forward. Keep a cool head, a stout heart. Gather yourself for the spring—every bit of you, body and soul, boldly take the leap, and you will find yourself in the arms of God.

ON SNAKE CHARMERS

Who will pity an enchanter struck by a serpent, or any that come near wild beasts? —Ecclesiasticus.

HAVE we ever considered what a wonderful organ is the tongue of man? Often enough we think of the eye, and how the whole big world of light and color and motion is first condensed into that tiny spheroid and, by some unfathomable process, instantly expanded again and vitally translated into its original size. We think of the ear, how into its orifice crowd the twisted and intertangled and apparently hopelessly confused medley of sounds, musical and harsh, shrill and deep, to be separated one from the other in a flash, located, identified, pigeon-holed.

But on that hidden organ, the tongue, we seldom fasten a thought. As with the great invisible powers of nature—light, gravity, the growing energy in animals and plants, powers operating about us and within us so continuously and unobtrusively

that we take them for granted and forget the fundamental marvel of them; so with the tongue, normally unseen, always poised for action, responding always easily, unhesitatingly, dependably, without strain, without fatigue, without even the suggestion of any physical limitation to its action, it with all its potentialities becomes a thing of utter commonness to us, and by reason of its very facility of use, we overlook it, as an unimportant asset among the gifts we possess.

And yet among all the material things that live and move and have their being, it is absolutely the most wonderful single thing. The eye conquers the wide field of vision, the ear weaves into patterns the knotted skeins of sound; but the tongue stands at the gates of the infinite domain of thought, translates it into words and gives it forth palpitating with the finest shades of feeling, imagination, intelligence. Every movement it makes carries with it happiness or sorrow, from the first happy babblings of the child, to the last sad farewells spoken over the grave. Soul meets soul across the bridge of language, and the tongue fashions every girder.

The Scriptures speak again and again of the tongue, almost with a note of terror.

"Life and death are in the power of the tongue," they tell us: the tongue is "a little member," but "a fire, a world of iniquity:" a poison more deadly than that of the basilisk and the asp. As the rudder guides the ship, so is it the helm of the spirit: an uncontrollable being—"but the tongue no man can tame:" the one great obstacle to our salvation—"if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man."

So the tongue is the fiery focus where all the forces of the soul converge. Its action is the resultant of a thousand actions that rush to that spot to hurl themselves out upon the world. A thousand looks, a thousand feelings, a thousand thoughts, can pack themselves together at that one point and leap forth with all their accumulated force in a single word.

If Scripture is frightened at the contemplation of the havoc the tongue can cause, certainly we should be frightened too. And very likely every boy, when he comes to think of it, will say to himself: "Yes, I ought to be careful about my talk, and I will be." That is a good resolution, and I have not a doubt that every one of us has often been forced into making it by some awful mistakes made with our ton-

gues. From our own experience we will agree that the old saws, "Silence is golden," "Think before you talk," "Walls have ears," put the case with an honest clearness.

Well, then, for the practical side of the work. How shall I take care? How shall I, in actual life, manage this tongue of mine?

The surest and at the same time the easiest way a boy can learn to talk right, is to listen right. Talking always begins with listening; and no boy has ever started on a destructive career of talking unless he has first been an easy and a curious listener. Out of the heart the mouth speaketh, and the reservoir of the heart is largely filled with what the boy listens to. Watch out for what is said to you, and you will watch out for what you say to others.

And if you really wish to watch out for what is said to you, make this your infallible rule: Don't let everybody talk to you. Don't be at the mercy of every random vagabond, to allow him to spear you like a fish or to truss you up like a target. Above all, apply this rule absolutely and without fail in the case of the impure talker.

And in this matter of the impure talker, understand that he is not always discov-

erable at first sight. More often than not he is cleverly disguised. He is not necessarily a low-browed individual, with a hole in his hat and his shoes untied. Very, very often he is well-dressed, clever, witty, with an intelligence much above par; bright-mannered, an observer of exterior etiquette, has money to show, is good at games, approachable, popular. Yet within he is full of rottenness. He uses his gifts to corrupt others, particularly boys younger than himself. These he will allow within the charmed circle, patronize them, treat them with a kind of bluff equality that makes them swell up when they think they are at last keeping step with the neighborhood hero.

And then he proceeds to victimize them with his talk. He knows all about things. Narrow-minded people, such as their elders, their parents, try to hide things from them. He'll tell them everything. And by jest and story and innuendo and insinuation, with the play of humor over it all, he slowly poisons the young minds that are feeding on the candied garbage, and causes every barrier of manly shame and boyhood modesty to crumble. And while the boys whom he is attacking imagine they are

learning things, having a good time, he is digging under the walls every minute.

At first they are startled, shocked, disgusted. But they stay right with him and gradually get used to the evil odor. They won't be "sissies," "mollies," or "mamma's boys." They'll be, as he says—broad-minded, strictly up-to-date, wise boys, in touch with the world, particularly the underworld.

They do not suspect what is the actual fact, that their patron is only a poser; that he does not know it all; that he has only the half-knowledge which is more stupid than the darkest ignorance. They do not realize that he has no idea whatever of the inner side of the case, of the hopeless destruction that all impurity brings upon soul and body. He deals in that worst form of lying, the half truth.

Any sensible person knows that this boy is a fool. But he is not the biggest fool in that crowd around him. And when we come down to hard facts, he is not the worst boy in the crowd, either. He is talking, it is true, and talking rotten stuff. But what makes him talk? The answer is plain. It is the crowd there that makes him. He talks because he has somebody

to listen to him. He is in the spotlight, but they put him there. If there were no listeners, he would not say a word. But he sees his green, unfledged "gang" gathered hungrily about him, and he feeds the slimy stuff into their gaping little mouths; stuff which they swallow with difficulty at first, perhaps, but which, with regular practice, they finally gulp down with facility.

Warn them of their danger, and they will tell you: "Oh, he can't hurt me. I'm perfectly safe. Don't worry about me. I just listen to hear what he has to say." The old story! The enchanter walks up close to the serpent, entirely certain that the coiled object is under his control, and that it will stop on signal. And the first thing he knows, the deadly fangs are plunged deep into him. The trainer steps into the wild beasts' cage, and the next second he finds himself being ground in their jaws. So the listener to the talk of the impure. He thinks he is an enchanter and can hold the talker back of the danger mark; a lion tamer, who has but to wave his hand and the beast will crouch backward. And suddenly he finds the tightening coils of a degrading sin wound around him and is bitten to death by the teeth of an evil habit.

Then in the recklessness of despair he ceases to be a listener and becomes a talker, chooses out his own victims, and devastates every soul his tongue can reach.

If, my dear boys, you would have the very best gift that life has for any of us, if you would be pure, clean, happy-hearted, clear of conscience, never listen for a minute to the evil talker. Shake him off; push him back; get rid of him. Sin, like misery, loves company. Freeze him by your absence. If there are no listeners, there will be no talker.

But if you encourage him, expect the worst. His talk will soon pass into your talk, and you will have entered upon the way of ruin—ruin to yourself and to everybody who touches you. And do not then cry out: "He ruined me!" Rather say, "I ruined myself. Bad as he was, he would not have talked had I not listened. It was I who made him talk. It was I who brought this on myself."

IN THE TRENCHES

His Lord said to him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."—St. Matthew.

WHEN the young recruit first says he'll be a soldier, what is his notion of a soldier? It is a vision in which drifts before his eyes the long parade, the spotless, natty uniform, the gleaming guns, the fine, firm line, marching in perfect step, wheeling, countermarching; the band playing, flags fluttering, officers riding along the line—everything in time and tune; great crowds along the way; hurrahs and handkerchiefs. And then the departing train, the silent handclasp, with its pressure that holds a world of meaning; and the tears of farewell, the gasps of admiration, the heart-thrills, the air surcharged with noble sentiments all around. This, he thinks, is being a soldier. He forgets that it is only a dream!

He forgets the real soldier life. He has no vision of the long, weary marches, the eternal drill, the tired feet and tattered

shoes; the camping on the hard, the wet ground; the chill, and again, the fever; the swamp-lands and the slime and slush; the climbing, wading, fording; the battle—its mad disorder; its blood, groans, thirst and hunger, nakedness and filth; rain, snow, fog, sleet. The hands that once playfully patted the gun now freeze to the lock; the feet that stepped ahead so springingly, now drag a trail through the dust; the voice that gayly hummed a battle song now gasps out a welcome to death. This is doing what a real soldier must do to save his fellow-men. And this is the only thing that counts.

So it is with the young boy, or the young man, looking forward to life and making the choice of his field of battle.

"What shall I be?" he asks himself. He generally decides that he is going to *be* something—and then he has a dream!

Being something is to him a beautiful picture. He sees himself in his chosen field, a brilliant success, holding his place with quiet grace and dignity; people crowding to get a look at him, a word from his mouth, a smile from his lips, a wave of his hand. He is affable to all, dispenses good will beamingly all about him, utters broad,

magnanimous sentiments and is cheered to the echo. Everyone bows down, as to the Lord High Executioner, and offers him the incense of deep homage. Money is handed to him, responsibility laid at his feet. He is the observed of all observers, the one bright star that makes the other stars in the constellation look like Japanese lanterns. This is being something—somebody! This is greatness; this is achievement!

He is drawn to forget—often in his young view of life he does forget—two words in Our Lord's parable, quoted above from St. Matthew: the word "servant," and the word "done."

"Servant!" And he has dreamed of himself as the master! He hears the word, and it has a disagreeable sound in his ears. Is he, then, a person upon whom commands are laid? Is that the highest position to which he can rise in the world—to be a mere servant, one who must obey and obey, and still obey? This is a discouraging and dreary outlook!

And yet, my dear boys, it is our only outlook. All our lives we shall be servants. We are built to be servants, and we shall not escape it. Command after command

shall be laid on us, in fact they are laid on us now—general commands, in the Ten Commandments; and besides that, special commands wherein are indicated the particular way in which each one of us is expected to carry out the general commands. For each one of us is destined for a special work that nobody in the world has ever done or ever can do. And for this work each one is equipped with a definite natural temperament and just such and such a measure of natural talents, to be used under a chosen set of circumstances. Added to these come certain supernatural gifts in the way of graces; and for the work the Lord wants done, these supernatural gifts are the more important of the two.

Don't say to yourself, "I have a lot of natural talent, and that'll get me through." It will not. It will take you a little way, with apparent success, but in the end you will find yourself marked down to zero. You remember Goliath, the big Philistine, who came out for forty successive days, terrifying the Jews with his challenges. And he looked the part, too. A huge giant, with a massive shield, a breast-plate, greaves, helmet, and a tremendous sweeping sword that made circles around him as big

as a mill pond. And yet David, with his little sling, and the smooth stone in it, and God's aim back of it, made that giant crumple up like a paper bag. Goliath had got along famously for forty days, but on the forty-first he was nothing more than a useless heap of junk.

We do need God's help, His grace. And taking this and weaving it in with our natural talents, from the combination we develop the kind of energy we need, each according to his gifts.

And what shall we use this energy for? Ah, that brings us to the second word our Lord emphasized, which the boy often forgets—the word "do."

Christ lays intense stress on "doing." It is His great test of love. "*Follow Me.*" "He that *keepeth* my commandments, he it is that loveth Me." "Go and *teach* all nations." "Go," telling of the Good Samaritan, "and *do* thou likewise." "When thou art invited, go, *sit down in the lowest place.*" "When thou makest a feast, *call* the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind." "Thy will be *done.*" "Master, what must I *do* to possess eternal life?" "Thou shalt *love* the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with

thy whole mind, with thy whole strength. And thy neighbor as thyself. This *do* and thou shalt live." And to the young man who asked Christ the way of life, the answer came, "*Sell* all thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, *follow me*."

See the clear-cut, rapid, brief, uncompromising answers Christ gives to those who ask Him how they shall become a permanent success in life—how they shall be something? It is go, and follow, and do, and sell your goods, all your goods—and give the money away! Call the poor in to your feasts; put yourself out for the unfortunate—all the while loving God by keeping His commandments with your whole heart; and do this, not with pharisaic ostentation, with stage strides and spectacular attitudes, but sitting down in the lowest place.

Then you will *be* something. "This *do* and thou shalt *live*."

And right there is the mistake we are in danger of making. We ask what we shall *be*, before asking what we shall *do*. We never shall be anything until we do something.

"What, then, shall I do?" you ask.

Well, we are servants, and servants of

the Lord. The idea of servant implies the idea of work—for what? Surely, for gain. But for what gain? For station, money, reputation? No. "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Christ wants only souls, and if we work for Christ, we work along that line only. No matter what our work seems to be on the surface, the last idea, the purpose back of everything else, must be the idea and the purpose of souls for Christ.

Shall I go into business, then, and make a fortune? Yes, into your Father's business, to make your brother's fortune.

Shall I enter the law and plead cases? Yes, your Master's case.

Shall I study medicine and heal bodies? Not so that you will forget to heal souls.

No man is exempt from this ultimate, supreme duty. Always the work is for souls. The servant is not above his master.

And each of us has appointed for him, and awaiting him, some definite work among souls. Each man is called upon to aid in the salvation of souls:—souls perhaps as yet unborn, perhaps even now at the grave's edge, but waiting for us only. Do not miss these souls.

One obstacle, and only one, can stop us in this work—the obstacle of a short-sighted selfishness; the coldness of self-interest, the miserliness of soul, the calculating spirit that meanly asks itself, "How will *I* come out of this?"

How did Christ come out of it? "Go thou, and do in like manner."

And if there be those among us who are called to be close to Christ in this work; if there be those whom He desires for special service, to devote their life directly to the care of souls, let them hear that voice calling to them across the waters: "It is I. Be not afraid." If there be those whose lives are so appointed—and among the boys whom I address I cannot but believe that God has special work in store for many, work that is not trafficking, nor any of the world's professions, but the intimate service of Christ in His priesthood—let no chill of the evil one's deceit freeze that great appeal of grace.

"I am not worthy," the timid soul will protest.

No man is worthy of the priesthood. But Christ will abundantly fill his needs. Let such a one think of the souls awaiting his words, his presence, his deeds. Let

him not dare to refuse this service, to hide his talent in the ground, to turn away mournfully and leave his Master. But let him place his feet firmly upon that path, follow that light, and that Master who calls upon him to "go and teach" His children and to lead them to Him as an older brother leads the younger home.

SEEING THE STAR

And seeing the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And entering into the house, they found the child, with Mary, His mother. And falling down, they adored Him; and opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts—gold, frankincense and myrrh.—Matthew 2; 10-11.

THIS little passage from St. Matthew introduces us to three of the finest and most lovable characters in the whole life of Our Lord. Somehow or other, after reading the few Scripture lines about them, we feel that we know these princely men intimately, and we love them at the same time. And we love them, not because they happen to be of high rank, rich men, powerful men; but because of a royal trait of character they show through every word that describes them—the great trait of generosity.

Every move they make reveals in them a constant high tide of generosity, the journey they made, first of all, to follow this star; the work of preparation, the leaving of home, the laying aside of their

accustomed pomp to become pilgrims in an unknown country, the risks they took along strange roads, then infested by robbers; the manly simplicity they showed in asking and taking directions from Herod; their dogged courage in pushing ahead, even when the star had disappeared from them.

Then, when they had found the spot, observe their perfect manners, their ability to make allowances for others, to understand others in a difficult situation; the entire absence of snobbery in their make-up. For after all their trouble, they were rewarded at the end with what was apparently nothing more than a hole in the ground—an old cattle shelter in the side of a hill. But we don't find them a bit ruffled at the setback, indignantly standing on ceremony, peevish because no one came out with pomp and flourish to meet the great princes. They did not stand haughtily back and say, "This cannot be the place!" No! Although they knew very well the etiquette of reception, here they wisely judged that formalities were not the thing. And so, as the Scripture tells us simply, "They entered into the house," taking for granted that an explanation would reveal itself at the proper moment.

And now their faith shines out. They had come to find a great king, one upon whom the stars attended, and they come upon a little, shivering baby, in an unlighted cave. Adore this child? Impossible!

Yet, that was exactly what they did, these kings. More than that; without any delay at all, right in that dingy place, they prostrated themselves before Him. "And falling down, they adored Him."

And then they offered the little King their gifts. They had thought of this before they started, and had brought along their treasures of gold, frankincense and myrrh. They had already given their time, surrendered their comfort, imperilled their safety; they had surrendered their titles to a child, and had foregone all ceremony in their honor. They had given the child their heart and life, and finally, not as a bribe to win His affection, but as a token of remembrance, they gave Him earthly gifts, their treasures.

Note that word "treasures." Not something they had left over, and did not know what to do with, but something choice, the very best things they possessed.

And these were the "wise men;" men who *gave*, and gave aggressively; who would not

let that Child escape from them until they gave Him everything they could give. Had He asked their kingdoms, He must have had them!

No wonder we love these Magi. They couldn't stop giving things to God.

It seems to me, my dear boys, that the thought of the Magi is a particularly useful thought for us at the Christmas time. We hear the Christmas time called, and we know it is, a time of peace and good will. But if we are not careful, we shall begin to look at only one side of this peace—namely, our own side. We may easily forget to imitate the Magi whom we admire, and may fail to rise up and go to Christ at any cost. We incline to act as if we had nothing to do, but others have all the duty of securing our peace and of showing us their good will. We think it a season of peace because we are not disturbed; because others are waiting on us, making much of us, providing unusually good things for us. And we deem it a season of good will because we graciously allow other people to be kind to us and to give us things. We, of course, have a very good will—when it comes to taking things, getting things for nothing. But as soon as disturbance comes, or any

trouble or annoyance to ourselves, then the season of peace is over. As soon as people seem to forget us, to stop giving us things, or do not give enough, or not the things we had set our heart on having, then good will goes, too. We have none at all for others.

In short, do we not, perhaps, find ourselves softly whispering to ourselves at this time, "What am I going to get for Christmas?" and not thinking in the least, "What am I going to give for Christmas?" We set ourselves down in a tiny circle, make ourselves the center of it, and expect people to walk up and hand things to us or leave them within easy reach. As for getting out of our little circle and giving things to others, why, we never think of it.

We strike the "professional beggar's" attitude—look plaintive; more than half consciously assume a helpless, dependent pose; put on one of those deserving-of-immediate-help faces; create a pensive, lonely atmosphere about us, together with a forlorn-cripple manner that marks us out as one who is very good, but unfortunate—oh, *so* unfortunate! If we don't get what we had planned on, our comments on the depths of stinginess to which others can descend would make the most acid satirist seem mild as milk.

If, however, we do get what we want, it is what we deserve. And after we render effusive — but strictly "professional" — thanks, we go away and hug our gift, forgetting all about the donor and everybody else except ourselves. At such times there is not much of the Magi in us.

"But what *can* I give? I am not like the Magi. I have nothing to give."

Can it be true that any human being has nothing to give? A being with a soul made for God, that God died for, that is great enough to be set above everything on earth; a being with understanding and the wondrous faculties of speech, sight, hearing, the power of loving and serving others, and it has nothing to give? Is it possible that one upon whom has been lavished life, and minutest care, and long training, and love and toil and anxieties and fears and endless watchfulness, has, after all this, nothing to give?

True, we may have no worldly possessions, but do these things really count when there is question of giving? The Magi, indeed, gave treasure, because it was one of the things they had. But they gave themselves first, and the treasure only as a token of their faith, with all that goes with true

faith, love and toil and adoration. Christ did not need the treasure, but he did wish to have first place in their hearts and lives. And they gave him that, though it cost them trouble. And we have things to give no less than they.

What have we? We have love to give, and faith, and surrender to God; the power to do things for God and our neighbor, even when it costs us trouble. And from this treasure we are rich enough to give to everyone.

At home, with father, mother, sisters, brothers, what about the kind word, the helpful deed, the generous response to little wishes? Do we take this trouble for them?

Among our friends, what is our record in forbearance, amiability, co-operation with them? Do we think of them and their feelings first, and of ourselves a shade later? It is trouble, but it is the finest kind of giving.

Among people in general: Is there any work we can do to help others, no matter whom? Do we ever consider the poor, the outcast, the friendless, even at the cost at times of cutting into our cash supply? Besides this, there is varied work which we can do with our Sodality, such as teaching

the catechism, visiting the sick, steadying a chum.

And with God: Is there anything we are keeping back from God and that He ought to have? Is there any passion in our lives, any false friendship, any occasion of sin, any unlawful pleasure, any "false treasure" in thoughts, words, actions, that we ought to give up? Give it up—now—for all time—never to wish it back.

This is the secret of life—to give, give, give; lavishly, without stint, of your very best, and always. And this not merely at the Christmas time, not merely when sentiment rules, or the passing feeling of piety, or when the enthusiasm of being helpful is on one, but under every difficulty and through every reverse, from youth to old age, give yourself generously every day and hour and minute to every human being you can reach, and through these to God, who from birth to death gave Himself for us.

Thus living steadily, courageously, without fear, but with a firm trust that He who sees our hearts shall always be with us to strengthen us, we shall go forward day by day, through a useful youth, a noble manhood, a fruitful life, until, after many toils

and dangers we shall come to the close of the journey and shall draw near the home that waits us all. Then, at the end, shall we see the star, and we shall "rejoice with exceeding great joy." And entering into God's house, we shall find the Child, with Mary, His mother.

WITH THE OTHERS

THE single incident that Scripture tells us of Thomas the Apostle contains a valuable lesson. It is the one jarring incident related of that time of holy joy between our Lord's resurrection and His ascension. And though it closes happily, the shock of surprise it gives us makes it stand out prominently among the happenings of those forty days.

We remember the facts: Jesus appeared to the disciples gathered together, and Thomas was absent. Upon his return he stubbornly refused to believe the word of the other disciples that the Lord had appeared, and they could do nothing with him until Jesus came again when Thomas was with them. Only then did he yield.

The surprising thing in all this is that Thomas, a chosen apostle, who had gone through so much with them, and who had always found them truth tellers, should have doubted their combined word with such persistent obstinancy. He must have known of the promise of the resurrection, of

the Lord's appearance to Mary Magdalen, of the supper with the disciples at Emmaus. And this final testimony of the entire body ought to have been the last straw in his attitude of doubt. Yet it took a special visit of Christ to win him over.

What is the key to this unusual state of mind? We have it from St. John who tells us the incident. Jesus appeared, and "Thomas was not with them." Later Jesus appeared, and John significantly says, "Thomas *was* with them." It would seem that the Lord had made it a condition that Thomas must be with the other disciples if he was to see his Master. Thomas was not with them and everything went badly. Thomas was with them, and all was well. The real source of all his trouble, therefore, was that he was not with the others.

And here we have the intimate lesson we are to learn from this whole matter of the doubting of Thomas. And the principle of our lesson is this: that when God wishes certain groups to live together, He gives His graces to individuals in the group, just in proportion as they identify themselves with that group, stay with it closely and keep its spirit.

Applying this lesson to ourselves, my

dear boys, let us ask: Are we anything like Thomas? First of all, has God grouped us together? Yes: young as we are, each one of us belongs to some group: to a certain class in school: to some Sodality: to our own family—father, mother, brothers and sisters.

And the very special group we belong to is our family, a group with special work, and special graces precisely for that work and no other. This is the group to which Christ Himself belonged for thirty of the thirty-three years he lived. And this shows us its importance in His eyes.

Here, therefore, are to be found our special graces. And the graces we are to get in our family will depend on our attachment to it, our devotion to it, our strict membership in it.

Let us ask ourselves, each one: "Am I really a member of my family?"

"Yes, surely," I hear somebody answer. "I eat there, and sleep there. And there's where I go when I have nowhere else to go."

Ah—nowhere else to go! That brings us to the very point. Is our home for us like a coaling station for tramp steamers? Or a lunch counter on a railway trip, where we dash in for a hurried mouthful

of food and dash out again and away? Or a mere place to sleep in, like a convenient haystack for a knight of the road? Do we seek out our home only when we are tired of everything else, looking on it as a kind of Hobson's choice, and going in with a feeling that it's here or nowhere, with an air about us that says plainer than words, "I'm forced to try this, because I can't think of any place else to go?"

And even while we are there, are we merely perched there like a bird on a branch, popping its head about right and left, looking for another branch to light upon? Are our heart, our thoughts, our imagination far away from family and home and all the love that surrounds us; off with our "crowd," perhaps, or our next game; so that it is plain to father and mother than their son is not interested in them at all, and is quietly snubbing them? Do not imagine that these things do not go to the heart of your father and mother. If they never say a word about it to you, it is because they are ashamed to speak aloud the heavy thought that is in them—that their own son has forgotten them.

And the "crowd" we are thinking of in preference to our father and mother, is

it one of the type so frequent nowadays—where the vile story, and the word of double meaning, and the dirty joke, and the impure allusion are its password and its steady entertainment? And after we have dipped our minds and hearts and souls into the slime that oozes from the decaying imaginations that we have chosen to feed upon, do we then return to our homes dripping with sodden degeneracy and slink to our beds like an animal creeping into its kennel?

"But," you protest, "shall I have no fun, no games, no noise and action? Do you want me to be a mollycoddle? To hang around my father? He doesn't care for that. To be tied to my mother's apron strings? The very worst thing for a boy."

I answer: Have plenty of fun, the very best games going and all of them; as much noise and action as you like; have friends, too, and keep them; and if to be a mollycoddle means to be unboyish, soft, lackadaisical, by all means don't be a mollycoddle.

But there is another part of life that must be attended to. You are not asked to "hang around" your father, but you must meet him like a manly boy, you must take an interest in his affairs; you must be his

chum, if you possibly can. And if you find that you cannot come that close, come as close to him as you can.

You are not to be tied to your mother's apron strings, but I do say, be tied to her heart strings; so that there is not a wish of hers that you will not know and sympathize with, and obey. Happy is the boy who does these things! His life through manhood, though perhaps commonplace in its visible surroundings, though with more than its share of disappointments and reverses and sorrows, will yet be filled and consoled with the invisible glory of the love that rose with him at the dawn of life, and shall light his pathway down to its golden close, if he has not, in the rash petulance of youth, cast it away.

And after life has closed, after the long road is travelled and the last downward slope is trod, it shall not end in darkness, but in a new, a soul-filling access of light. After the vision, the reality. After home, comes heaven! You remember the poet's song of the skylark singing on high and then settling into the nest:

Type of the wise who soar but never roam,
True to the kindred points of heaven and home.

The instinct for home means the instinct for heaven. Kindred points! Closeness to home means closeness to God, to His grace, to the great reward He has allotted us. And in proportion as we detach ourselves from our family where God has put us, we cut ourselves off from the good things He holds for us. Are we straying from home? In our hearts, our thoughts, affections, ideals? Do we need the warning of Thomas? If we need it, and heed it, all will be well. If we are not faithless, but believing, we shall find ourselves, at the end, in the company and the care of those to whom God has entrusted us, and we shall not be absent in the hour when Christ shall appear and shall speak the words that mean so much to all of us, "Peace be with you."

A TOUCH OF THE WHIP

ONE OF THE striking facts of life, from which it is impossible to escape, is the attention which the body receives. Nature herself speaks the first word in its favor. For the first seven years of the life of a man, almost all the care given him is bestowed on his body. Two other beings are chosen out to attend to it—the parents. And while one of these goes out and works to procure all the child needs, the other remains at home in constant attendance upon the little one, and that attendance entirely upon the body. Selected food, special clothing, the regulation of heat and light, measured hours for eating, drinking—the whole house, in fact, is regulated according to the requirements of the child.

Outside the home, it is the same. Look about as you move through the city. What do you observe on the billboards, the street-car signs, the newspaper advertisements, theatre programs, electric displays? All about the kind of wine or water or coffee

to drink; the bread or vegetables or fruits to eat; clothing, medicine, automobiles;—to cover the body, or to heal and strengthen it, or to carry it around. Certainly Nature and all the customs of men are for the body.

And yet St. Paul comes boldly in and tells us that we must chastise our body; tells us that if we would be certain of ourselves, if we would win the fight before us, we must beat that body into subjection. "I fight," he tells us, "not as one beating the air. I chastise my body and bring it into subjection."

What kind of advice is this? After spending years of anxious care and thousands of dollars of money in building up and elaborating that delicate and complicated and precariously fragile structure, to turn and attack it? After all the labor to keep suffering away from it, to cause it pain ourselves? After warding off all blows from without, to buffet it about with our own hands. Such advice is foolish on the face of it. Does a man build and furnish his house, and then disorder and wreck it? Or does he plant and water his trees, and then go about with a hatchet chopping at them?

The case seems strong against St. Paul.

Stop the game! We desire that team and no other to appear before us

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But let us consider it a little further. Suppose a man does build a fine house and furnish it handsomely. He is proud of it, because it has cost him much time and ingenious planning. But suppose that the house begins to act queerly; that the windows begin to twist out of shape, the doors to sag and narrow, the walls to gape, the chimneys to choke, the furniture to move around and pile itself where it pleases. Or again, suppose he finds his trees with their branches tangling about one another, or shooting off at ugly angles, or growing downward instead of out and up. Then what does he do?

In the first case, you will very soon see him with axe and saw and hammer and nails and props, going at that house and doing it savage violence. And with his orchard, you will see him with pruning knife and huge clippers cutting those trees and making them grow as he wishes them to grow.

It is exactly the same with the body.

The body is indeed a great factor in our lives. In itself, it is a beautiful, a noble piece of handiwork; a miracle of design and wondrous adaptability, admired beyond words by everyone who studies its structure.

In its operation, it is no less wonderful—the purveyor, the messenger, the forager for the soul, sweeping the wide circle of earth and heaven to gather the soul's material for thought. It is valued highly by the Church as the "temple of the Holy Ghost." And God Himself has set His seal upon its importance by making it the subject of five of His Ten Commandments.

Nevertheless—and here we come back to St. Paul—the body is only a single factor in the welfare of a man. There is another, the important factor, man's soul. Great as the body is, it is but the servant of the soul. And the danger is, that if this servant be allowed to go unchecked, it will do what all pampered servants do. It will become arrogant, insist on being the master, drag the soul down to the position of an inferior and subvert the whole law of life by substituting for the soul's standard of good and evil the body's standard of pleasure and pain.

Exactly here is where the chastising has its place. The body *is* great, *is* wonderful, *is* important, is whatever you please to say in praise of its admirable mechanism. But the fact remains that it is the body—the tool, the subject, the servant of the soul. It

has tremendous powers, passions, instincts, and it makes violent efforts to have them recognized all the time. Insistently it cries out for satisfaction or comfort, for luxury, pleasure. It is a spoiled child that must be whipped into obedience. It is a greedy, ungrateful, stubborn, domineering child that will never know its place until it is forcibly put into it, never cease insulting us until we punish it.

"I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection." Note how St. Paul distinguishes between the "I" and the "body." He considers the body, when there is question of chastising it, as a thing apart and disunited from his soul. And so it is. Whenever the body does need chastisement it is simply because there is an attempt on its part to break away from the soul and her authority, and to drag the soul after it. Then the body must be brought into subjection, just as a dangerous criminal is put under lock and key. The soul has to be first always, but to hold her place she must often do battle for her position.

If this is not done, then our real troubles begin, the troubles of sin. It is the body with its senses that is the occasion of all our torture of soul, ever since that first day

when Eve listened to the serpent and looked upon the tree and tasted the fruit thereof.

The choice we have to make at last is between the soul's pain or the body's. Either we check the body, hold it in leash firmly, with all its peevish and stubborn passions and all its complaints that it is being hardly treated, or we measure out to ourselves the deadliest pains of soul—disgusted with ourselves, in despair of God's friendship, sick of the present, fearful of the future, helplessly palsied and dejected. How many a man, how many a boy, has groaned to himself, "O, if I could get my soul out of this slavery! If I could only conquer this body of mine! If I could only be free!" When a boy says "if" in a case like this, you see where he has been driven by his body. His soul is in subjection, with the body laying on the lash.

Let us make up our mind to one thing in this world, if we never make it up to another. Teach the body its place. Keep it where it ought to be. And if it attempts to refuse, do what St. Paul did, beat it into subjection. "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off. If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out," are the words of Christ. That is, give up anything that belongs to

the body and its senses, no matter how necessary it seems for the body, rather than have your soul in its slavery. And if it comes to the cutting off of a hand, or to the plucking out of an eye, let it come to that.

And begin to do this one thing now, while you are young. Don't beat the air with wordy resolutions of great future conquests. Now is the time. There are duties, disagreeable to the body, all around us, coming steadily up before us every day. Attend to them—studies in class and out; home duties to father and mother; directly spiritual duties, frequent Confession, Communion, prayer which is not a dull formula but an alert communication with God; the habit of doing a thing because it is right, and not because we like it. These things, cleanly done right from the start, are like the flicks of a whip on a race horse. They keep the body from wavering out of the true path, and at the same time give it impetus to cover with steady speed the long road ahead.

SINKING THE WOODEN ONES

YOU have read of the ironclad Merrimac in the Civil War. When first she chugged her way out into Hampton Roads, everybody laughed. She looked like the ugly duckling—an old tin gabled roof floating on a raft. And the veteran sailors in the big wooden vessels manned their guns and got ready for a few good shots by way of target practice. The only thing that worried them was that after a shot or two the fun would be ended.

From the nearest vessel a gunner trained his gun and fired. The ball hit the Merrimac and hit her hard, but she only shook herself like a horse shaking off a fly, and the huge missile bounded off her and fell into the water. Two guns got into action, ten guns, every gun in the harbor, and every one found the target. But the cannon balls rattled harmlessly, like so many peas, off her armor. It was merely rain on the roof for the Merrimac.

And when it was all over, large quantities of recently splintered wood, a few

masts sticking up through the water and a wide unruffled surface of harbor were all that could be seen—and the little Merrimac, ugly as ever, and without the least self-consciousness, chugging homeward. She had cleared out the old wooden vessels, not only for that day, but for all time. She had revolutionized sea-fighting!

If we could imagine the sturdy Merrimac thinking about herself on this trip, we could imagine her giving herself high words of praise:—because she was doing well, doing just what she intended to do, what was expected of her, and what she expected of herself. She was throwing off attacks from right and left, and at the same time driving off the old washtubs of vessels that had tried to sink her. She had every reason to praise herself.

Turning this incident upon our own experiences, we often think, perhaps we are often told, that we must not praise ourselves. But God expects us to praise ourselves, and strenuously, even as St. Paul praised himself, if we can. And if we have no praise for ourselves at all, we may be sure the Lord has none for us, either.

The only trouble in the whole matter is that we constantly tend to praise ourselves

for things that we shouldn't praise ourselves for at all. We are proud of our natural talents, our brains; proud of our looks, of our speed of foot, of our beautifully rounded muscles. We think we are all right if we wear the latest cut of clothes, if our necktie is becoming to our complexion, if our watch charm hangs elegantly. And we have seen boys looking extremely perk after a simple haircut.

These are nothing to be proud of, you will tell me. Right! They are not. What, then, can we be proud of? There is only one thing we have any license to praise ourselves for, and that is our power of will. True, this is a gift, and it needs grace to carry it along safely. But it is a gift with this wonderful quality, that it can go by itself, direct itself, propel itself. It is the only thing we have, the only thing in the world, that can do this remarkable work of accepting or rejecting as it pleases. No other part of us can do that. No part of the man moves until the will gives the word, and the will can give any word it chooses.

The will, therefore, is the home of liberty, but at the same time the home of our responsibility. It is the exact spot where we are "ourselves." And so it is the only

part of us that we can blame or praise, as having of our own selves done thus or thus. And God expects us always to be able to praise ourselves for our use of the will, in those words that are the highest praise—"I did right."

To do right, that is to accept or reject steadily according to God's law, the will must be in good condition. The Merrimac was so built that it would admit light and air, but reject bullets. And that is the test of the will. Does it admit what is good and cast off what is evil? Does it, like the Merrimac, admit the good easily, and shake off the evil instantaneously? Its condition will be graded according to the speed and the efficiency of its action on these lines, its alertness, its power of giving evil a rapid rebound. And it ought to be solidly strong at every point, for if it is not, one shell out of the thousands will tear through.

Now to test our will at a few points and to find out how it works. How about our thoughts, for example? Here come a million thoughts a day, some bad, some good, some doubtful; some from without, some from our lower selves, but all turning a steady fire, and at times a terrific fire, upon

our will. How does my will act here? Does it admit the light and the air, the good thoughts? And is it like an armored iron-clad against the shells and the bullets—the evil thoughts? Or have I a will like a pie set carelessly out, that the dog simply walks through?—or like an old cheese, nibbled full of holes by the rats?

And our companions? Have we the kind of will that tolerates any kind of companion, any kind of talk, suggestion, innuendo? Sometimes, outside of a town we see a swamp, a mushy, bubbly quagmire, into which is flung all the refuse and garbage and dead cats—ugh!—that the town doesn't know what to do with. An insufferable spot into which everything decayed and odoriferous is thrown. Am I a boy with a bubbly swamp for a will? Do I allow any other boy who comes along to fling vile thoughts, impure words, putrid stories into my soul? Do I perhaps even laugh at the process in a sickly way, in the hope that the narrator will think me a good fellow, right up to date?

My dear boys, be sure of this: If any boy has rotten thoughts he wishes to pass along and he chooses you to pass them to, believe one thing only—his opinion of

you is that you have a soul fit for sewage! When we make a present to a person, we adapt the gift to the person. We give a rattle to the baby, a baseball glove to the boy, a good book to a reader, flowers to the sick. And when your so-called friend presents you with a line of filthy talk, he has sized you up beforehand and decided on what he thinks fits you.

Be ironclad on these two tests—the thoughts we admit, the companions we become familiar with. Anything evil from either of these sources shake off instantly with all the determination that is in us.

"But I shall be laughed at for a goody-goody and a prude."

No such thing. You are not called upon to preach a sermon to the offender. You needn't look large-eyed, nor sweet, nor pious, nor shocked, nor even the least bit embarrassed. In fact, it is much better that you shouldn't. But you have somewhere about you a far away look, haven't you? Or a frosty countenance, or an absent-minded answer? These are a few beautiful "straight arms" for the low fellow that tries to tackle us. You can manufacture your own defense according to

circumstances, and it will generally be a good one.

"But it is difficult, this being always on the defense, and uninteresting, too!"

You are not on the defense at all, once you start to act. Don't lose sight of the Merrimac; her defense was complete before she started out at all. And the rest was a fine offense. They laughed at her at the start, but that was the last laugh they ever had. She simply kept on coming, and when she was through with her "defense" there wasn't anything left. And it was rather interesting besides, wasn't it, after licking that big flock of wooden ones, to have the whole Hampton Roads to herself?

And so with you. You will find that all these filthy talkers are really "wooden ones," out for some cheap applause. A rapid little bunt from the prow of a plucky ironclad goes right into these worm-eaten scows easily, and sinks them. It's fun sinking mud-scows. And everybody near by is relieved. Besides, one has then more room to sail around in. And fresh air and water, too. And that isn't such an uninteresting thing to have. Perfectly comfortable, it seems to me.

One idea more: In the Merrimac battle,

only one man was injured, a lieutenant, I think, who had his eyes destroyed while peering through one of the slits in the iron tower. Doubtless, he had good reasons for being where he was, and his injury did not affect the final outcome of the fight. Enough of the crew were left to man the ship. But in our battle with evil, we must beware of looking for trouble. Because there is only one man aboard in our ship, and if anything serious happens to him, the ship founders.

Let God do the watching for us and through His grace give us the orders when and where to fire. Then we can praise God for His help and praise ourselves for having manfully accepted it.

ON PLANTING REGRETS

NOT long ago a university journal sent out a request to the alumni of the institution, asking each student to write and say briefly what was the principal regret of his college days. Most of the answers were highly interesting, but one letter in particular seemed to me to hit squarely on the head the nail at which all were, more or less consciously, aiming. The writer of this letter said that the chief thing he had to regret since he had left school was that while in school he had had no adviser in his moral life. Plenty of teachers were at hand, many of them able and effective, but no moral guide. And to this one defect he traced all the unhappinesses of his later life. Had he been seized, he said, and faced correctly toward life at that time, he would have been spared many mistakes and falls, many years of darkness and pain of soul.

Most of the other writers made much the same complaint, under various forms of speech. They had no adviser at the start

to teach them how to steer, and they were turned out upon the world without chart or compass.

It is, perhaps, an exaggeration to say that a correct "facing" of life in our study years will do away with all the moral troubles of after days. But anyone who has lived through the world's stress will tell you, from his own experience, that he had strong leanings afterwards toward what he began to do in his school days. If he went wrong in youth, his terrible tendency was to stay wrong, to get worse. If he went right, it took an unusual force to budge him in later years. It is the old saying borne out, that the boy is father to the man.

Now, we certainly do not wish to belong to that class of boys who begin in their youth to plant regrets for their older years. We want to start right. Then let us lay down at once the unalterable rule: You will never start right in your youth, without an adviser. Youth has strength, speed, stamina, willingness, courage, but it lacks one essential thing—experience. In the language of boxing, youth has the punch, but not the judgment of distance. And poor judgment of distance means that the

blows aimed mostly fall short and at the same time pull the attacker squarely into the approaching fist of his opponent. The result is generally told in a word.

Now, in one form or other, judgment of distance is needed in everything we undertake in this world. And the way it is always learned is by taking counsel from the word and the training of those who know. The man who will take no advise is looked upon with distrust on account of the damage he is sure finally to do to himself as well as to all who happen to be caught near him. And the boy starting life who thinks he can pilot his way alone and unadvised through the moral whirlpools that await him is the boy over whom mothers weep and fathers despair.

There are several types of boys who in their youth plant regrets for later years. We may briefly consider a few. First, there is the boy who is caught by passion in his early life; who has contracted bad habits; runs with a wild crowd; does what the crowd does; who, while at school, goes to confession when he *has* to; after school days goes rarely, or not at all.

This type of boy does not want any advice, at least not any good advice. He

And Mary will understand us

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has started out by thinking he knows it all, though really he has been taking advice right along from the "gang," and has fed out of its dirty hand. He resents advice as an intrusion, as "preaching." The only thing to do with him is what the employer does to the employe who gets huffed under direction, and that is to "let him out." The police courts or the asylum will attend to him later.

Then there is the shy boy, whose tendency is to keep at a distance from anyone who might prove a friend in need. He is afraid to ask a question, afraid to state his case, afraid to meet his own difficulties, because he imagines that no one ever had difficulties like his. Shyness in itself is not a bad quality in youth, but its danger is to run into secretiveness and a kind of sulky stubbornness that is sure to work harm to the one who lets it dominate him.

The over-shy boy never will be candid with his father and mother, never with his confessor. He will do enough to keep himself afloat, but he will never learn to swim powerfully, and he takes the dangerous risk of drowning.

The third type we will mention is the boy who is not characteristically shy, but

who, nevertheless, remains distant for the reason that he thinks his father or his mother or the priest will not care about listening to him. He is willing to be advised; but he thinks, for example, that the priest does not want to be bothered with boys or their difficulties. At the confessional, he says to himself that there are too many waiting and he will not delay them. And as for calling on the priest at his house, the priest has other and bigger things to attend to than talking over a boy's troubles.

Now, it is never a person's business that bothers him. It is the things not in his business that bother him. And this boy forgets that it is precisely the priest's business to talk over difficulties, whether of old boys or young ones. "Do you not know," our Lord said, "that I must be about my Father's business?" The business of His Father was the business of souls, and that is the business every priest is in—to save help, direct, advise souls. So it is absolutely no "bother" to him.

All these boys are making a serious mistake right at the beginning, where mistakes count. They are getting a false start. There is only one way to meet this dif-

ficulty, and that is by being aggressive, bold, importunate. Make up your mind that you *will* get the solution of whatever difficulties beset you, that you simply must have it. And after that one decision you will find everything else easy.

This is what the Church wishes us to do. How does the Church act with us? Does she spy on us, try to "catch" us? Do you notice her ferreting out anything about you, nagging, peeping, listening, trailing you about? Not at all. She lays her commands on all alike, offers her helps to each one of her children, but after that she leaves it to you to do the aggressive work. If there is watching to do, then do it yourself. Listen to yourself, nag yourself, ferret yourself out. And after you have done that, then take advice of those who know how to help you. That is her policy. She knows very well that she cannot drive you; that God Himself cannot, if you oppose Him. And so she says, "Follow me. I am the way." Then she goes ahead, and shows the road, beckons, encourages, assists. She does not lurk behind you, sleuthing you. Her methods are not dark-lantern methods. She is the way, but we must bestir ourselves to find the way. "Come

unto Me all you that are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest." But we must do the coming, and carry the burden to her. We must have advice, indeed, but we must also ask for it.

Is this sensible, reasonable, in perfect accord with human nature? It surely is. Any other method would not be treating us like men. Suppose a man driving his automobile discovers that the mechanism has gone wrong. He cannot repair it himself, and, if it is not repaired, he knows that it will skid over an embankment some day, or stop suddenly at a crossing where trains pass. What does he do? Keep on driving it? No; he takes it to a repair shop. He consults with experts. He explains, as well as he can, where the machine has been going wrong. He asks advice, and follows it like a sensible man. If he does not act so, he will surely come to grief.

If you wish that tremendous engine, your soul, to go straight, and go dependably, watch it carefully. Observe when it wobbles, when it refuses to respond to the wheel of conscience. Then get it to the repair shop; ask advice and do what is recommended. This is the first move, absolutely essential. And it is your move.

And learn the habit of doing this while young. Shyness grows with age; hesitation, indulged, results in a dead stop. Then comes stagnation of soul, with a shell hardening and thickening about it all the time, until the soul is shut in, isolated, and life is finally one long sigh of hopeless regret. Don't plant regrets in your youth.

ON HAVING OUR OWN WAY

ONE of the earliest surprises that comes to a boy in this world is the fact that he cannot have his own way. At first, of course, he doesn't believe it is a fact. The one thing that he is sure of at the start is that he is going to have his own way. Little Jack, sitting on his mother's lap, "boos" at the moon and stretches up his mites of hands to clutch the big gold toy. When he finds that he doesn't quite reach, he turns to his mother with a long, large-eyed, mournfully dignified look, as who would inquire, "What does the moon mean by this strange conduct?"

We laugh at our friend Jack for his simplicity, and it would be really only a laughing matter if Jack were to get over his idea then and there. But he doesn't. He still retains the conviction that in this little contest the moon was wrong and Jack was right. And the very next thing he wants, he goes after it on the same prin-

ciple. His way is the right way. Every other way is wrong.

"Naturally," you will say, "he begins to 'get his bumps.'" But—and here is where our laughter begins to fade—this particular type doesn't learn a thing from the bumps he gets. He has experiences, but he never arrives at experience. How can he? He is always right, and being so, he has already reached the goal of all experience—he never makes a mistake.

Then how does baby Jack explain the bumps? These are all horrible blunders, or cruel wrongs done him, the outcome of others' ignorance or malice. So, his child's surprise turns gradually into resentment at the unfair way in which he is treated. Thence he declines into the perpetual grievance stage; thence into "the sorehead;" thence into "the grouch;" thence into the cynic, until at last we have our Jack at thirty years of age, suspicious, snarling, sour, and with exactly the same idea of himself he had at thirty days. Jack never gets into his second childhood because he never gets out of his first. Large numbers of Baby Jacks encumber the ground. From "boo" to booby is one step for them, and they never take another.

On the supposition that one wishes to avoid belonging to the B. J. class of humans, what is one to do? The answer is contained in three short words: Stop—Look—Listen. Rightly studied and applied, these three little words will prove to be the combination to the safe that holds our happiness.

First of all—Stop. Early in life—the earlier the better—when just about to step out into the world's work, stop upon the verge.

And why stop?

In order to *look*—to look well, steadily, carefully.

At what?

At that world out there before you—that wild, whirling, kaleidoscopic maze of men and women of every age and condition, with every variety of temperament, character, taste, circumstance, ambitions, ideals, desires of soul and body; each individual of those crowding millions, with a definite goal to gain, and set plan of battle to gain it; lives and purposes crossing and recrossing at every conceivable angle, and in the most unexpected encounters; advances and retreats; clashes and crashes; savage eddyings and zigzag dartings and plungings forward, backward; a bewild-

ering labyrinth of tumultuous, fiery, unquenchable souls, twisting, intertwining, entangling themselves into constantly shifting patterns that no human eye can trace, and no human mind forecast.

One good look out upon this seething ocean, and instantly you will say to yourself—"This is a riddle I shall never solve. In this world of men I shall never have my own way."

And you will be right.

That is the one clear note steadily rising out of the apparently infinite disorder. Listen for that note, hear it, believe it, and you have obeyed the three magic words, Stop—Look—Listen; and you hold the combination to your own happiness. You have beheld a true vision: you have learned the lesson of life.

But only theoretically—only, so to say, out of the book. There yet remains the doing, the following out of the vision, the practical, personal solution of the problem. Life, after all, is a big Dotheboy's Hall, with Squeerses blossoming over it at sufficient intervals. We spell out a few words in our early years, and then, often as not driven by one or other of the multiplying Mr. Squeerses, we go knocking up

and down the world the rest of our existence, trying to "do" the spelling in a more or less presentable actuality. The important difference between Mr. Squeer's establishment and life is, that in life so much depends on our spelling. If we wrongly spell the first few words, we shall never "do" things, never get our work just right.

However, let us take for granted that we have spelled our first words correctly, "Stop—Look—Listen;" and memorized our first line well, "I shall never have my own way." Thus armed and accoutred, our next move is to step down from the peak of contemplation into the valley of actual life.

Anything but a peaceful valley, this. A pulling and a hauling and a mauling; a hurlyburly; a Donnybrook fair on an immense scale. This is surprisingly different. A moment before, on our peak of vantage, we understood everything; now, whirled in the melee, we understand nothing. Then, at least, we saw some faint outlines of a pattern: now we see nothing but stars. In spite of our clever spelling and our clear-cut memory lesson, this makes us peevish, irritates us, maddens us, until we begin to believe that, as a defense against

this tremendous storm, the "Stop—Look—Listen," and "I shall never have my own way" recipe is about as effective as would be the effort to stop with a winning smile an insane elephant.

Nevertheless, the recipe still holds true. And, if we would prove this to our own everlasting remembrance, let us set aside one day out of our lives on which we determine to turn fiercely upon the maddening crowd and for a single space of twenty-four hours to have our own way.

What shall we begin with? Shall it be dress? Very well. Let us adopt a style of garment wherein one trouser's leg ends at the knee: add a bright green coat, a crimson hat, and a pink necktie hanging down our back.

After this we shall certainly need food. Step into a restaurant and call for whale's blubber, or demand from our grocer fresh flamingo's liver, and at once; or refuse to allow the corner peanut-vendor to proceed with his business until he has served us an oyster stew.

By this time we shall have need to travel. Board a street-car and, with sneers for the conductor, order the motorman to reverse his direction, as it is our royal wish to go

backwards. After that, take short cuts through the city, not by way of the streets, but over the roofs of houses.

Or, pursued by alienists and others, perhaps we desire to see a ball game. Dash through the turnstile without paying, and, when we discover that it is the Athletics vs. the White Sox, stop the game, and explain that being interested in the Tulsa, Oklahoma, team, we desire that team and no other to appear before us. (Air thickened with baseball bats, police clubs, pop bottles, cushions.)

Or shall we choose to have our own way in society? March into a social gathering and tell all who are there exactly what we think about them!

And, when the day is done and the departing rumble of the ambulance has died in the distance, when all the world is still, and we—well, somewhat stilled also, we shall, after a long interval of silence, lift our head from off the hospital pillow and whisper, "Please hand me my spelling book."

And just at this point we begin to emerge from the dismal swamp of experiences out on the firm field of experience. We begin practically to fit into the world of men about us.

Objections immediately start up: "Such a day as outlined above is a burlesque upon the facts. It never really happens."

I answer that it is not a burlesque upon the facts. It does really happen. The picture is enlarged, but not exaggerated. Constantly, though on a less spectacular scale, the selfish struggle of men to have each his own way goes fiercely on, and just as constantly is trouble, often world-wide-trouble, arising out of this struggle, like steam from a caldron. And each battle, microscopic though it be, contributes its mite to the cloud that blurs our vision of peace on earth.

"But what of my individuality, my initiative, my personal influence in this world? Am I to be a cipher, a dummy, an automaton?"

I answer that the real ciphers in this world are the men who are bent always upon having their own small way—the wire-pullers, fortune-hunters, fawners and flatterers. The lives of these men always sum up in zero. Napoleon was born unheralded on a little island. He tried, as few men have tried, to have his own way. He gathered together many armies, wielded much apparent power, and died alone on

another little island, after years of a life there with less than the liberty of his babyhood. He strove for isolated power; he achieved isolated weakness. And his story is infallibly repeated in the life of every man who imitates him, however distantly. The man of genuine individuality and initiative is the very man who knows best that to have his own exclusive way is the one fatal blow to his cause. The man who never seeks his own personal way is the man we trust forever.

"But if the winds of opposition blow against the house of my conscience? If the current of the world dashes me toward the reef of sin? Shall I not have my own way then, and fight the evil?"

Yes, then we must fight the evil; but even then we shall not be having our own way, but God's way. And this point opens to us the full purpose of life—the perfect harmonizing of the material world without us with the spiritual world within. "He that loveth his life (with the emphasis on 'his') shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal."

MOTHER OF GOOD COUNSEL

Mother of Good Counsel—Pray for us.

THIS latest invocation added to the Litany of the Blessed Virgin is peculiarly suited to the needs of the present day. It is made up of practically two words, but these contain two great ideas. And first the idea of counsel.

Counsel may be defined as deliberate advice. And if we look about us at the world we move in, we find it to be a world of advice met with at every turn and under every artful guise. The newsboy shouts along the street, advising us to read all about the latest murder, the latest bank robbery, the startling family scandal. In the street cars, from the shop windows, the bill posters, the display signs, we are persistently advised to take thought as to what we shall eat and what we shall wear and how we should entertain ourselves.

The lives of those about us, also, the things we see them do, what we hear of them, are other forms of advice. We see

people of wealth seeking happiness at the cost of conscience, and their example is tacit advice to us to do likewise, even if on a smaller scale. Our companions, our acquaintances, every word we hear, every movement we observe, is only so much advice hypodermically injected, we may say. And finally our lower nature advises us and frequently echoes violently all the advice with which we are literally pelted from every quarter of the world.

How very much of this advice directly or indirectly tells us to let go duty, conscience, purity, the friendship of God, and to pick up with the first pleasure we meet! And it keeps coming in, bewildering, puzzling, alluring, discouraging us, weakening us down—all this *bad* counsel, this deliberately bad advice.

Surely we need some defense, some balance, some advice on the other side. Sometimes, of course, when we think we are particularly strong, we imagine we don't need defense, advice. We have youth and speed and power, and we dash forth with a buoyant recklessness, only to end like the great ship Titanic that tore full speed through the ice fields, only to have the knife edge of an iceberg rip open her

side and plunge her, and all the souls that had trusted her, into the deep. The young soul often perishes thus, and it never goes down alone.

But in our clear moments we do see that we need help. Then where shall we go to get it? Advisers are rare. It is not a simple matter to find one who can really guide our soul. Because the guide whom we will trust absolutely even in a single one of our spiritual difficulties must be one who understands, and sympathizes with human nature through and through; not in a general, theoretic, text-book fashion, but in concrete, flesh-and-blood detail.

Just as in a hazardous journey through a wild mountain chain, we should never choose a guide who had studied the ground from maps merely and from photographs, nor one who knew but a single trail, and outside of that was baffled. But we should trust only one who had been over every foot of the mountains in person, and who had at his finger tips every bypath and cross trail of the whole range. So it must be with the soul-guide we shall lean upon utterly, to guide us surely over the particular road God wishes us to follow. It is necessary to have one near us who knows the multi-

tudinous and twisting roads over which the millions of men travel, each on his own chosen way, and who can, from the tangle of intercrossing roads, unfailingly pick out our very road, and none other.

More than this: Our guide must not only be one who knows the individual road, but must in addition show us how to travel it, step after step; must see far ahead of us, see the last point to which we should climb; must estimate how fast we can climb, and how high; where we should rest, where hurry; where risk, and where to be cautious. So that there shall be a definite final aim for me as an individual, and so that on my way to accomplish that aim I shall constantly put forth my best work. In short, the guide whom I shall choose, and trust forever, shall be one who understands and sympathizes with not merely human nature, but my human nature.

Who shall advise me at this vital turning point?

Our difficulty is no sooner encountered than it is solved. The Mother of Good Counsel is with us! Among all beings purely human, she is the best of all counsellors.

And why?

Because, best of all mortals, she understands human nature. She had with her, as her child and her constant companion, the most wonderful of all human beings. Him she studied perfectly; saw with her own eyes, followed with her own heart, beat by beat, the human nature in her Son, perfectly operating.

Not, then, as one studies out of a book, did she study Jesus; for years and years the very pulsing of His life was around her; His words, acts, even His thoughts were present to her. He talked with her, told her everything, His difficulties, His troubles, His wishes, His ideas about us and her part in helping us. And just as she had given Him bodily life, He in turn fixed indelibly upon her soul the image of Himself in the smallest detail of action, the image of the perfect child of God.

Mary, therefore, best of all, knows the end each of us should reach—the imitation of that Son, whose perfect life on earth she remembers with such accuracy today through every little turn. And when we go to her, she can tell us just exactly how He acted and just exactly how we can bring ourselves, each in his own way, to imitate Him. She is the only one

who saw everything, and she is the only one who can tell us all about Him in absolute detail.

And finally, she is not only the best of all counsellors because best in the knowledge of human nature, but she will counsel us *as a Mother;* she will best understand *my* human nature. This is what we want—affectionate advice. We do not wish to be nagged, spied upon, pursued. Neither do we wish to be neglected, overlooked, forgotten. We desire to be treated kindly, clearly, understandingly. No lofty condescension about the advice we get; no hard superiority; no icy remoteness; no peevishness nor discontent with us; no hint of despising us. For though we may perhaps be strong enough to despise ourselves, we would never be strong enough to have her despise us. And this she will never do. The blessed charm of the Mother of Good Counsel lies not in her distance from us, but in her loving nearness to us.

Our part, then, is to see to it that we do not keep aloof from her; that we do our share in going right up close to her; in talking to her familiarly, as a son to his mother. And Mary will understand us, love us as our poor human hearts crave to

be loved, crave it the most when we are at the lowest ebb in our spiritual fortunes.

She will love us even more after she has heard us out; tell us gently what to do; with her own mother's hands will help us out of any trouble whatsoever, with the tender constancy, the unwearying persistency of a mother. She will aid us to get to the surface the best that is lurking in every one of us. She will hear our troubles patiently, confer with us unhurriedly, affectionately show to us the very particular trait in her Son's life that meets our present difficulty. She will start us quietly upon the work of imitating that trait, will remain near us unobtrusively to guide us with gentle mother-touches of suggestion, and she will prove in all ways unto us our dear Mother of Good Counsel.

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